

## University of Dundee

### Superhuman Futures

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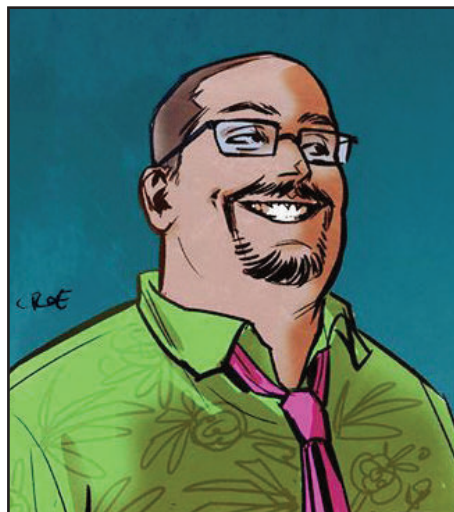
# **SUPERHUMAN** **FUTURES**



Murray  
Balson  
Laird  
Greenwood

A stylized signature in white ink, possibly reading 'LB'.

# SUPERHUMAN FUTURES



This comic explores the idea of the superhuman, with a particular focus on some of the science fiction stories that have influenced it, such as *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley, *The Coming Race* (1871) by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Gladiator* (1930) by Philip Wylie, and *Odd John* (1935) by Olaf Stapledon. It also draws on the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, Julian Huxley, Charles Darwin, Francis Galton, Michel Foucault, Dziga Vertov, Donna Haraway, and others, to consider the wider social and conceptual implications of the superhuman. The first story takes the form of a research paper in comic form and argues that the contemporary figure of the superhuman, most often encountered in comics, is a reaction to the modern industrial world, but also has ancient origins and functions as both an aspiration and a warning about human evolution and the future. This draws on debates about eugenics, transhumanism, and posthumanism. It is also argued that developments in media, including the emergence of comic books and film, use the innovations of these new ways of representing human experience as a metaphor to imagine the capabilities of the superhuman. The two other

stories featured here put some of these ideas into practice, and drawn on some of the tropes and conventions of the superhero genre, and especially their capacity for parody, satire, and intertextual allusion.

This comic would not have been possible without the superhuman talents of my collaborators, Elliot Balson, Eve Greenwood, and Catriona Laird, as well as Dr Damon Herd, Phillip Vaughan, Dr Golnar Nabizadeh, and Dr Dominic Smith. It was also made possible by the support of several individuals. Thanks are due to Dr Murray Frame, Professor James Livesey, Brenda Murphy, Sarah Conway and Liz Faini.

**Professor Christopher Murray**

Chair of Comics Studies, University of Dundee

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Edited by Phillip Vaughan, Golnar Nabizadeh and Dominic Smith. Production by Damon Herd.  
Front cover and back cover design by Elliot Balson.



**University  
of Dundee**

**UniVerse**



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"I WANT TO SPEAK ABOUT BODIES  
CHANGED INTO NEW FORMS."  
- OVID, THE METAMORPHOSES (8 AD)

ANCIENT MYTHS AND LEGENDS OFTEN  
FEATURE SUPERHUMAN FIGURES WHO  
REPRESENT FORCES OF NATURE.

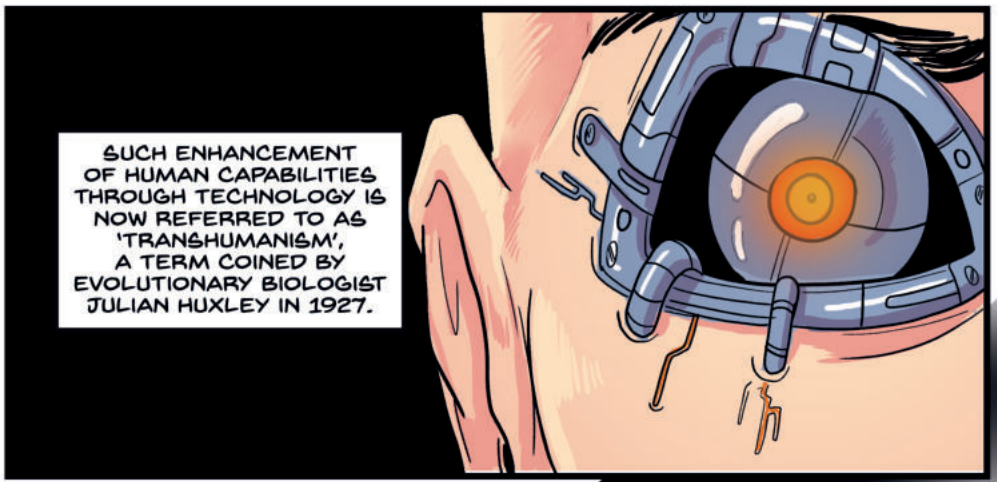


BUT THEY ALSO MEDIATE  
DEBATES ABOUT SOCIAL AND  
TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE.




IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY,  
THE TITAN PROMETHEUS IS A  
SUPERBEING AND THE CREATOR  
OF HUMANITY, MOULDING THE  
FIRST PEOPLE OUT OF CLAY.

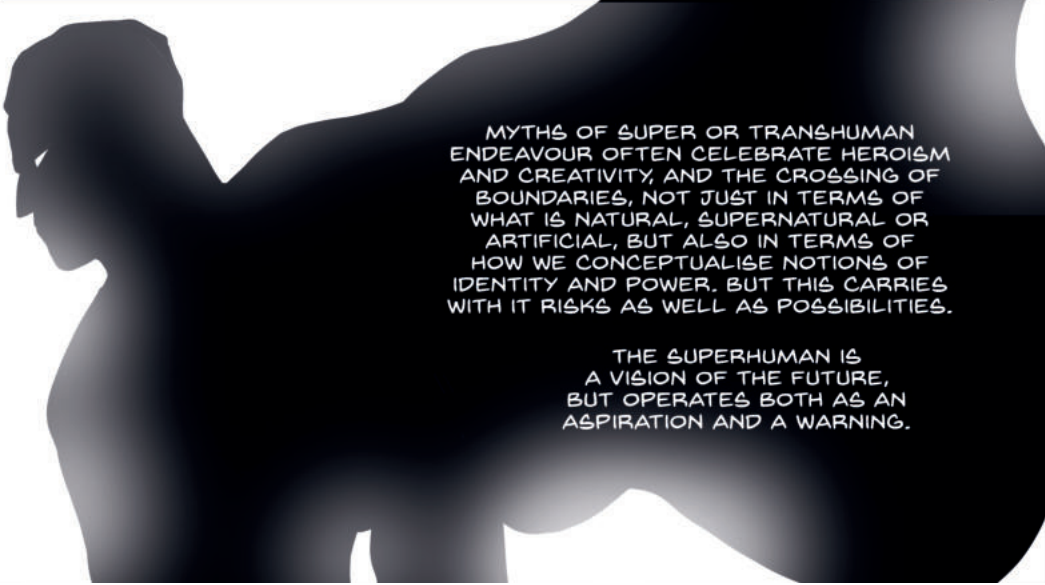
HE LATER STEALS THE SECRET OF  
FIRE, A SYMBOL OF CIVILISATION  
AND TECHNOLOGY, FROM THE  
GODS, GIFTING IT TO HIS CREATION.  
HE IS SENTENCED BY ZEUS TO BE  
TORTURED FOR ALL ETERNITY.



SUCH ENHANCEMENT  
OF HUMAN CAPABILITIES  
THROUGH TECHNOLOGY IS  
NOW REFERRED TO AS  
'TRANSHUMANISM',  
A TERM COINED BY  
EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGIST  
JULIAN HUXLEY IN 1927.



THE INVENTOR DAEDALUS BUILT  
ARTIFICIAL WINGS OF WAX TO  
ESCAPE IMPRISONMENT WITH  
HIS SON, ICARUS. IN A WARNING  
AGAINST HUBRIS ICARUS FALLS  
TO HIS DEATH WHEN HE FLIES  
TOO CLOSE TO THE SUN.



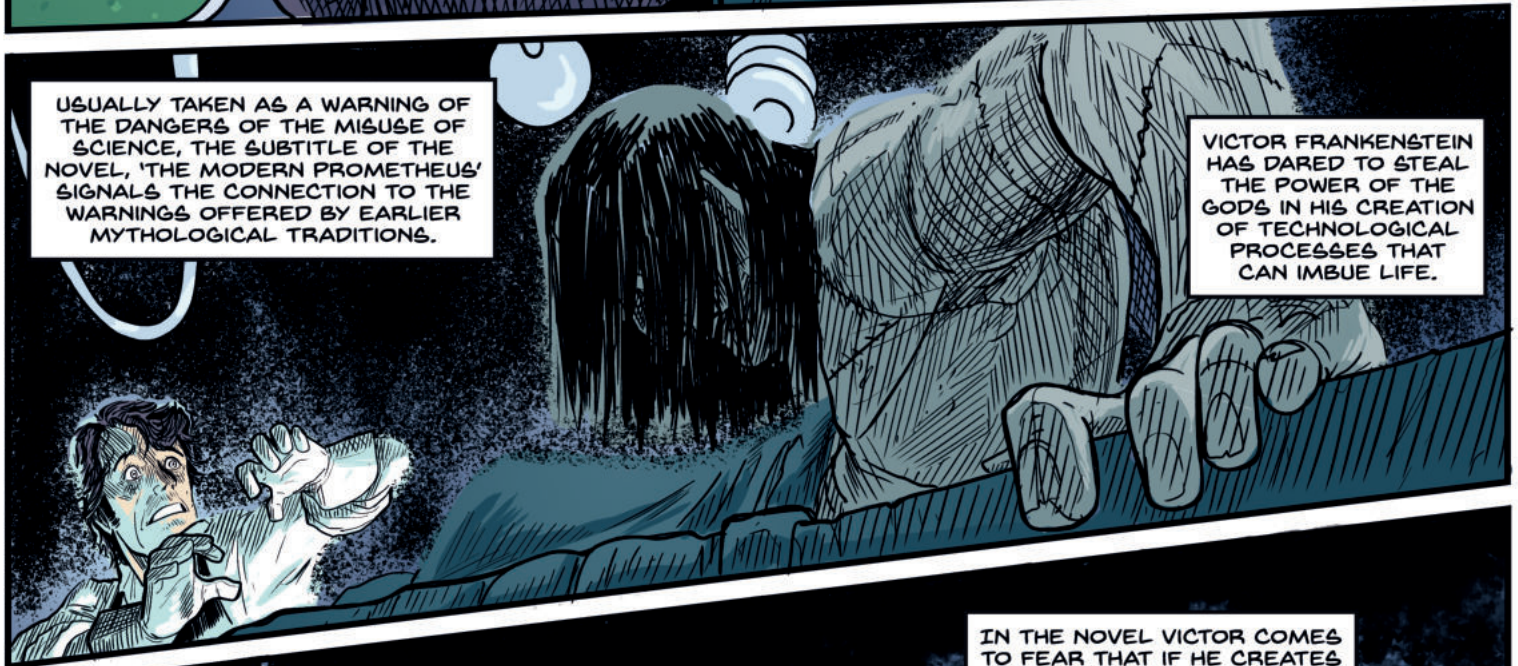
MYTHS OF SUPER OR TRANSHUMAN  
ENDEAVOUR OFTEN CELEBRATE HEROISM  
AND CREATIVITY, AND THE CROSSING OF  
BOUNDARIES, NOT JUST IN TERMS OF  
WHAT IS NATURAL, SUPERNATURAL OR  
ARTIFICIAL, BUT ALSO IN TERMS OF  
HOW WE CONCEPTUALISE NOTIONS OF  
IDENTITY AND POWER. BUT THIS CARRIES  
WITH IT RISKS AS WELL AS POSSIBILITIES.

THE SUPERHUMAN IS  
A VISION OF THE FUTURE,  
BUT OPERATES BOTH AS AN  
ASPIRATION AND A WARNING.





ONE OF THE MOST PROMINENT EXAMPLES IS THE CREATURE IN MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN* (1818).



USUALLY TAKEN AS A WARNING OF THE DANGERS OF THE MISUSE OF SCIENCE, THE SUBTITLE OF THE NOVEL, 'THE MODERN PROMETHEUS' SIGNALS THE CONNECTION TO THE WARNINGS OFFERED BY EARLIER MYTHOLOGICAL TRADITIONS.

VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN HAS DARED TO STEAL THE POWER OF THE GODS IN HIS CREATION OF TECHNOLOGICAL PROCESSES THAT CAN IMBUE LIFE.



IN THE NOVEL VICTOR COMES TO FEAR THAT IF HE CREATES A MATE FOR HIS CREATURE THEY WILL PRODUCE A RACE OF SUPERBEINGS WHO WILL DOMINATE AND TORMENT HUMANITY FOR ALL ETERNITY.

HE SAYS, "A RACE OF DEVILS WOULD BE PROPAGATED UPON THE EARTH WHO MIGHT INFLICT THIS CURSE UPON EVERLASTING GENERATIONS?"

"HAD I RIGHT, FOR MY OWN BENEFIT, TO INFLICT THIS CURSE UPON EVERLASTING GENERATIONS?"

"I SHUDDERED TO THINK THAT FUTURE AGES MIGHT CURSE ME AS THEIR PEST, WHOSE SELFISHNESS HAD NOT HESITATED TO BUY ITS OWN PEACE AT THE PRICE, PERHAPS, OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE."

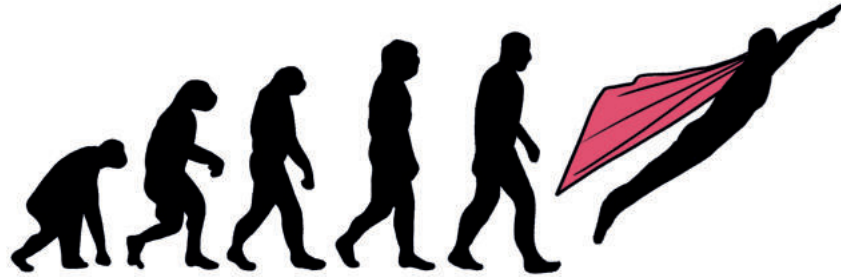
ANTICIPATING CURRENT DEBATES ABOUT THE EXPLOITATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES, VICTOR IS TROUBLED BY THE REALISATION THAT HIS ACTIONS COULD HAVE DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES THAT MIGHT LAST FOR GENERATIONS.





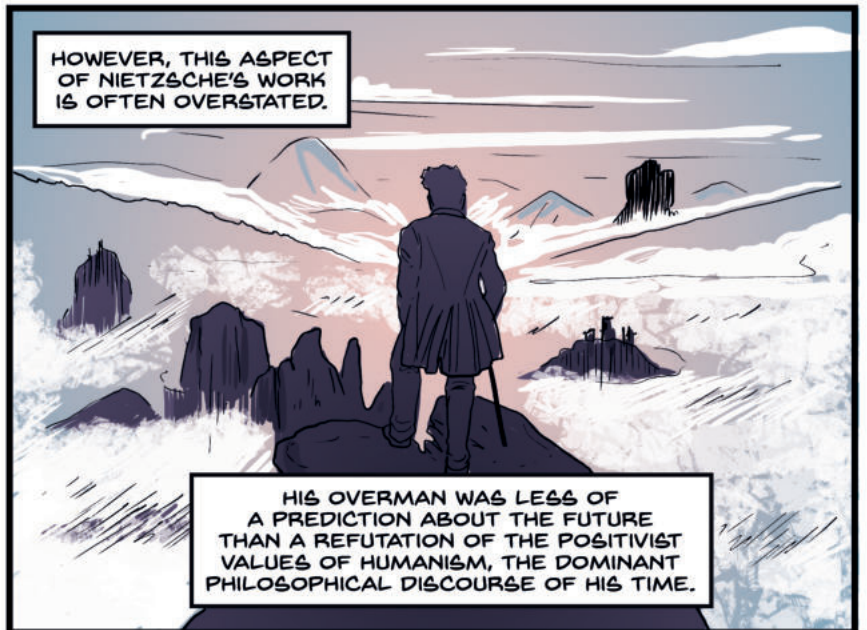
VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN'S VISION OF HUMANITY BEING SUBJUGATED OR REPLACED BY A RACE OF SUPERBEINGS WAS GIVEN A SCIENTIFIC BASIS BY CHARLES DARWIN'S THEORY OF NATURAL SELECTION, AS REVEALED IN *THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES* (1859).

DARWIN'S WORK IMPLIED THAT IF NATURAL FORCES SHAPED THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY RATHER THAN A DIVINE HAND, THEN HUMANITY MIGHT EVENTUALLY BE SUPPLANTED BY ANOTHER SPECIES.

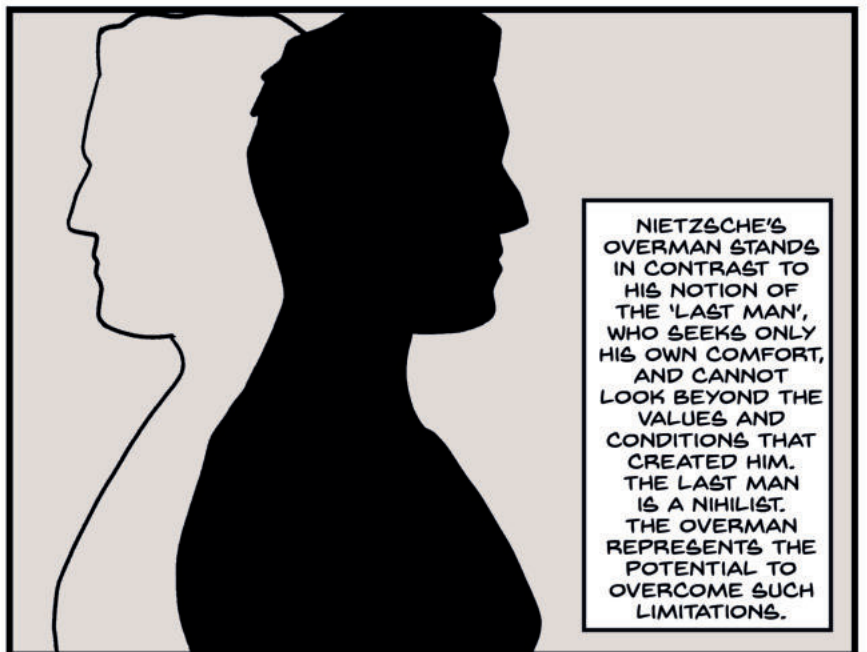
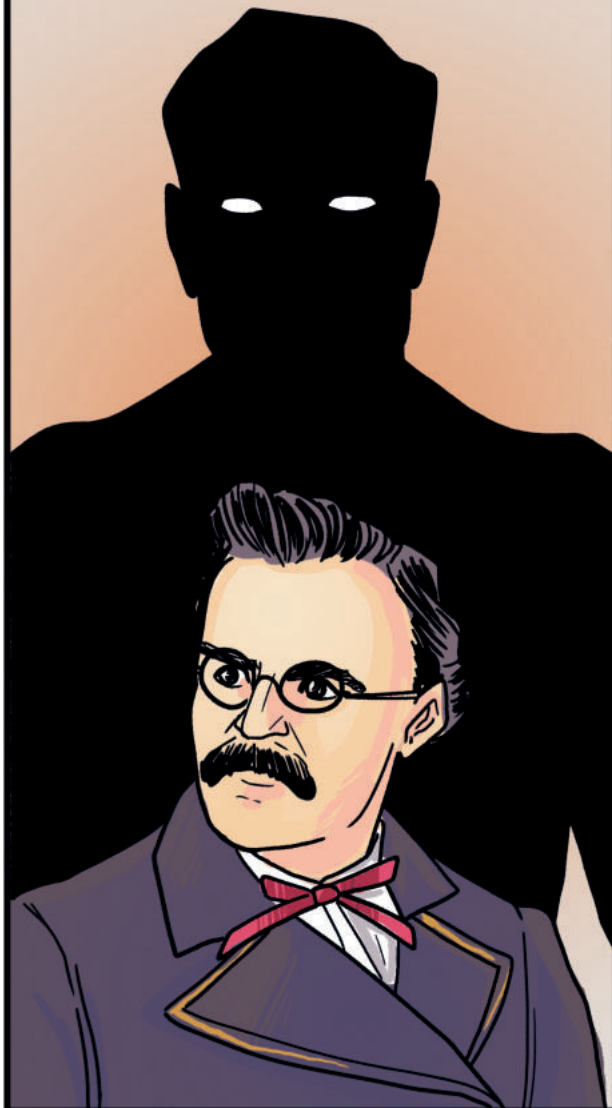


APOCALYPTIC THEMES ALSO UNDERPINNED FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE'S CONCEPT OF THE ÜBERMENSCH DESCRIBED IN *THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA* (1883), ALTHOUGH NIETZSCHE CONSIDERED HIS 'OVERMAN' TO BE BEYOND MEDIOCRE NOTIONS OF MORALITY.

HOWEVER, THIS ASPECT OF NIETZSCHE'S WORK IS OFTEN OVERSTATED.

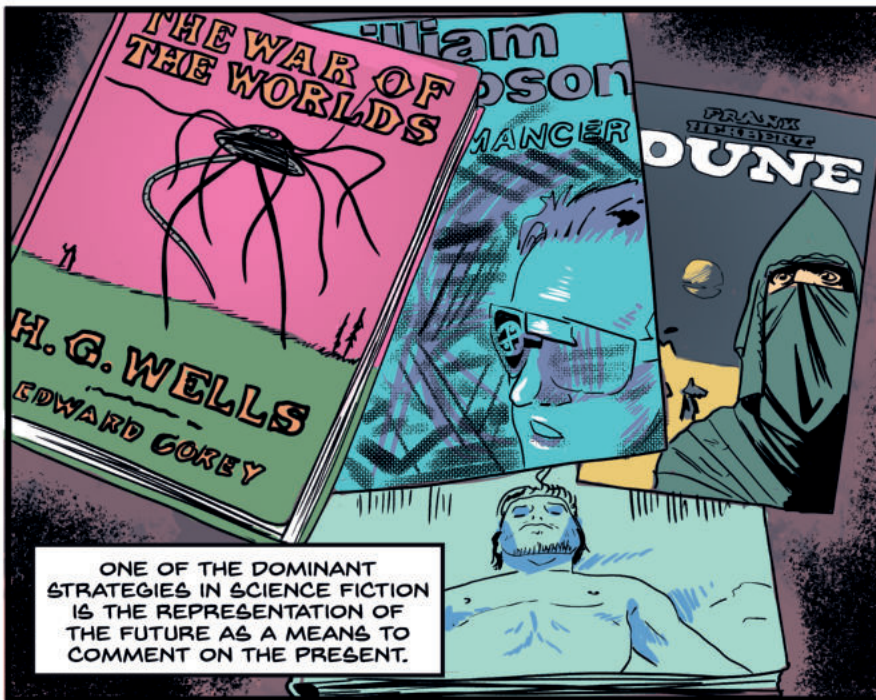


HIS OVERMAN WAS LESS OF A PREDICTION ABOUT THE FUTURE THAN A REFUTATION OF THE POSITIVIST VALUES OF HUMANISM, THE DOMINANT PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE OF HIS TIME.

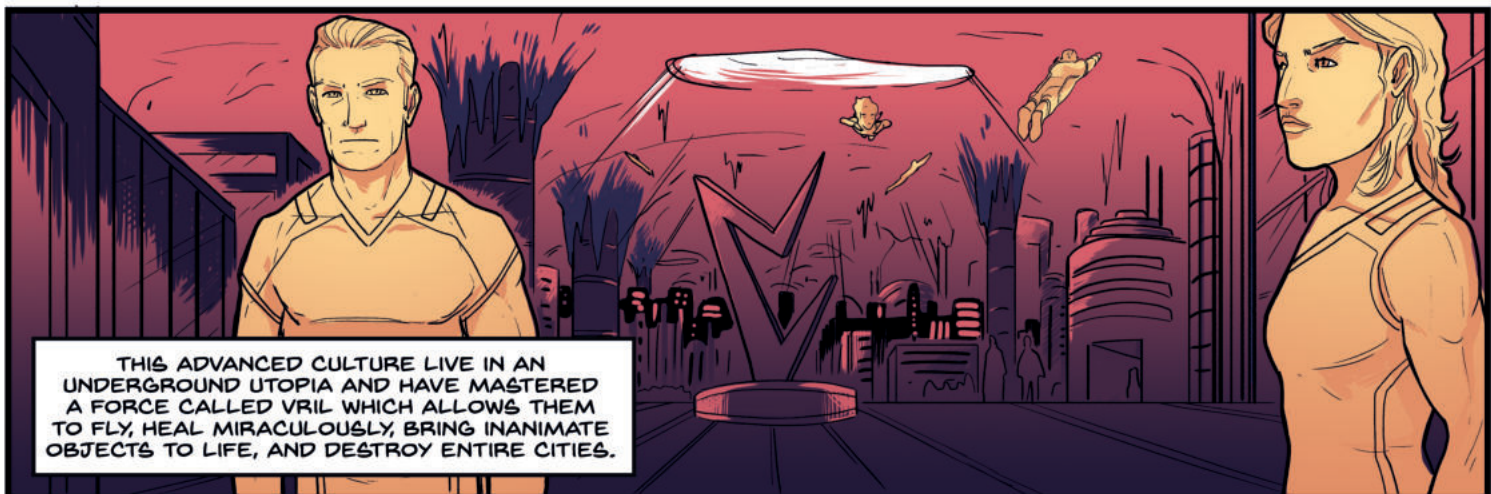


NIETZSCHE'S OVERMAN STANDS IN CONTRAST TO HIS NOTION OF THE 'LAST MAN', WHO SEEKS ONLY HIS OWN COMFORT, AND CANNOT LOOK BEYOND THE VALUES AND CONDITIONS THAT CREATED HIM. THE LAST MAN IS A NIHILIST. THE OVERMAN REPRESENTS THE POTENTIAL TO OVERCOME SUCH LIMITATIONS.

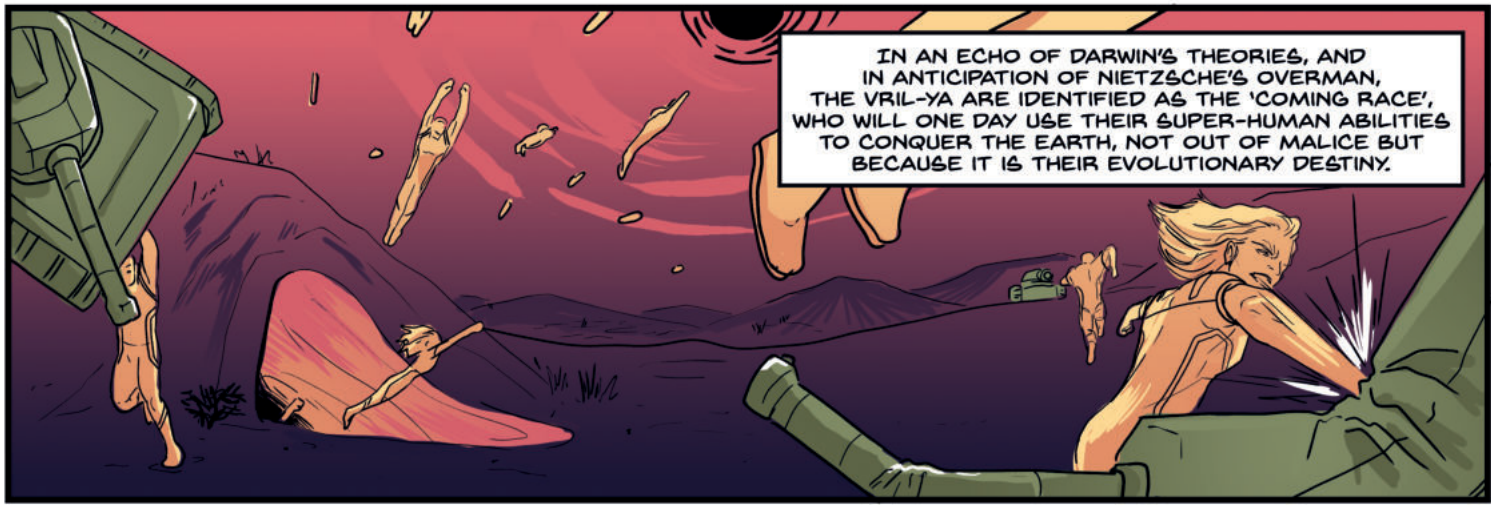




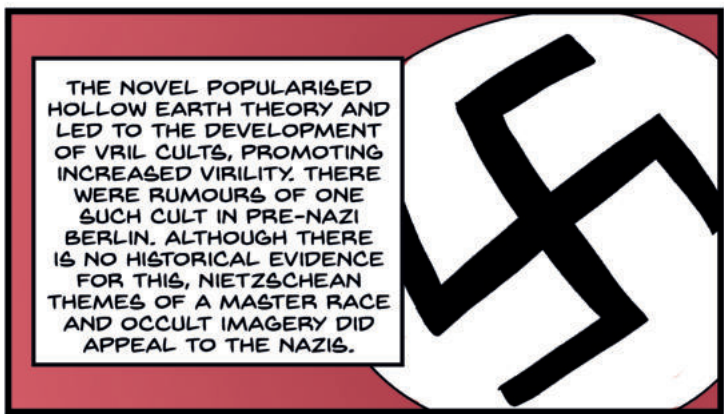
THE COMING RACE (1871), A NOVEL BY BRITISH NOVELIST, POET AND POLITICIAN EDWARD BULWER-LYTTON, TELLS THE STORY OF EXPLORERS DISCOVERING AN ANCIENT UNDERGROUND CIVILISATION, THE VRIL-YA.



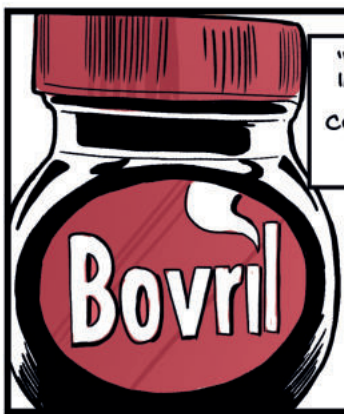
THIS ADVANCED CULTURE LIVE IN AN UNDERGROUND UTOPIA AND HAVE MASTERED A FORCE CALLED VRIL WHICH ALLOWS THEM TO FLY, HEAL MIRACULOUSLY, BRING INANIMATE OBJECTS TO LIFE, AND DESTROY ENTIRE CITIES.



IN AN ECHO OF DARWIN'S THEORIES, AND IN ANTICIPATION OF NIETZSCHE'S OVERMAN, THE VRIL-YA ARE IDENTIFIED AS THE 'COMING RACE', WHO WILL ONE DAY USE THEIR SUPER-HUMAN ABILITIES TO CONQUER THE EARTH, NOT OUT OF MALICE BUT BECAUSE IT IS THEIR EVOLUTIONARY DESTINY.



THE NOVEL POPULARISED HOLLOW EARTH THEORY AND LED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF VRIL CULTS, PROMOTING INCREASED VIRILITY. THERE WERE RUMOURS OF ONE SUCH CULT IN PRE-NAZI BERLIN. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR THIS, NIETZSCHEAN THEMES OF A MASTER RACE AND OCCULT IMAGERY DID APPEAL TO THE NAZIS.



'VRIL' CAPTURED THE PUBLIC'S IMAGINATION AND LED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF BOVRIL, COURSES ON HOW TO INCREASE YOUR VRIL, AND OTHER SELF-IMPROVEMENT FADS.

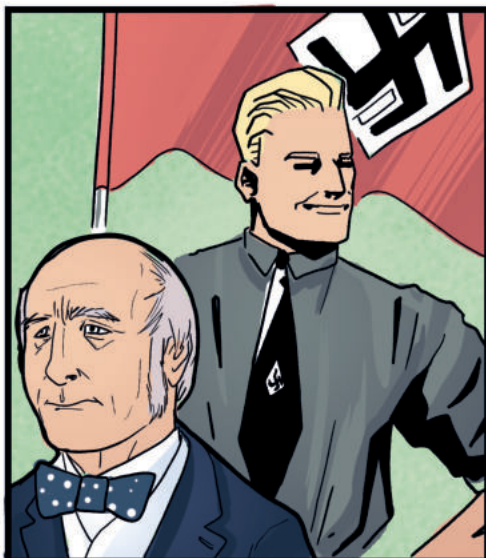


DARWIN AND NIETZSCHE, TOGETHER WITH POPULAR FICTION LIKE THE COMING RACE, FUELLED AN OBSESSION WITH THE PURSUIT OF PHYSICAL SELF-IMPROVEMENT AND GENETIC PURITY IN THE LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES.

# EUGENICS

WHILE EUGENICS HAS BECOME MORE COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE NAZIS THERE WERE VERY INFLUENTIAL EUGENICS MOVEMENTS IN BRITAIN AND THE USA IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY.

H.G. WELLS AND WINSTON CHURCHILL WERE NOTABLE PROPONENTS OF THE CAUSE, AS WAS WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, THE MAN WHO DESIGNED THE WELFARE STATE IN THE UK.



THE TERM 'EUGENICS' (MEANING 'WELL-BRED') WAS COINED BY DARWIN'S HALF-COUSIN, FRANCIS GALTON, AND DESCRIBED AN ATTEMPT TO SUPPOSEDLY IMPROVE A POPULATION OR RACE THROUGH CONTROLLED BREEDING IN AN ATTEMPT TO ELIMINATE 'UNDESIRABLE' CHARACTERISTICS OR TRAITS.

GALTON WAS ALSO FAMOUS FOR EXPERIMENTING WITH 'COMPOSITE PORTRAITS', THROUGH EARLY PHOTOGRAPHIC TECHNOLOGY. THESE PSEUDOSCIENTIFIC IMAGES CAN BE CONSIDERED AS EARLY FORERUNNERS OF TODAY'S FACIAL RECOGNITION ALGORITHMS.



PROBLEMATICALLY, GALTON USED THEM AS VISUAL PROPAGANDA TO PROMOTE HIS IDEAS ABOUT EUGENICS. HE BELIEVED THAT THE DISABLED AND 'FEEBLE-MINDED' SHOULD BE DISCOURAGED FROM HAVING CHILDREN. SUCH ATTITUDES WERE MAINSTREAM IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY, AND REMAINED SO TO THE 1930S WHEN THE NAZIS STARTED TO GIVE SUCH ATTITUDES A BAD NAME.



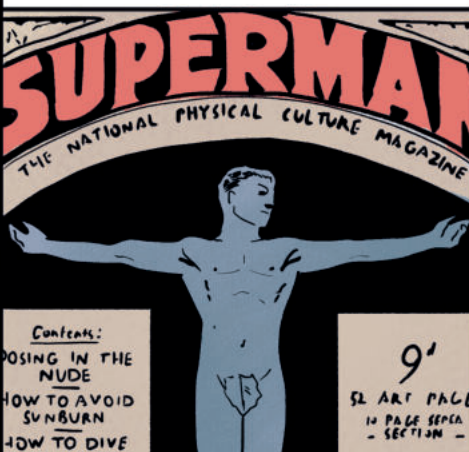
EUGENICS AND EXTREME SOCIAL DARWINISM WAS USED TO JUSTIFY RACISM, THE MOST WELL-KNOWN EXAMPLE BEING THE NAZIS' 'FINAL SOLUTION' TO 'THE JEWISH PROBLEM' -- THE HOLOCAUST.

THIS WAS ALSO THE TIME WHEN BODY BUILDING BECAME POPULAR. BERNARR MACFADDEN, ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE BODY-BUILDING IN THE UNITED STATES, PUBLISHED *PHYSICAL CULTURE* IN 1899. THERE WERE GERMAN AND BRITISH VERSIONS OF THE SAME TYPE OF PUBLICATION, AND THE MAGAZINE OFTEN FEATURED ARTICLES ON EUGENICS AS A SOCIAL NECESSITY.



MACFADDEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE IDEA OF THE SUPERHUMAN COMES FROM THE FACT THAT IT WAS HIS PREFERENCE TO BE PHOTOGRAPHED LIFTING HEAVY WEIGHTS WITH A LOOK OF SERENE, CALM DETACHMENT, RATHER THAN GRIMACING WITH THE EFFORT, SUGGESTING SUPERHUMAN POWER.

EUGENICS AND BODY BUILDING WERE OFTEN USED AS A MEANS TO TALK ABOUT AND REPRESENT CONSERVATIVE VALUES, SUCH AS PURITY, ORDER AND STABILITY, DISGUISED POLITICAL OR RACIST IDEOLOGY AS SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE.



IN THIS SENSE, THEY FUNCTION AS INTERESTING EXAMPLES OF WHAT THE FRENCH PHILOSOPHER MICHEL FOUCAULT WOULD LATER CALL 'BIOPOLITICS', THE POLITICAL ATTEMPT TO 'PUT LIFE IN ORDER'.

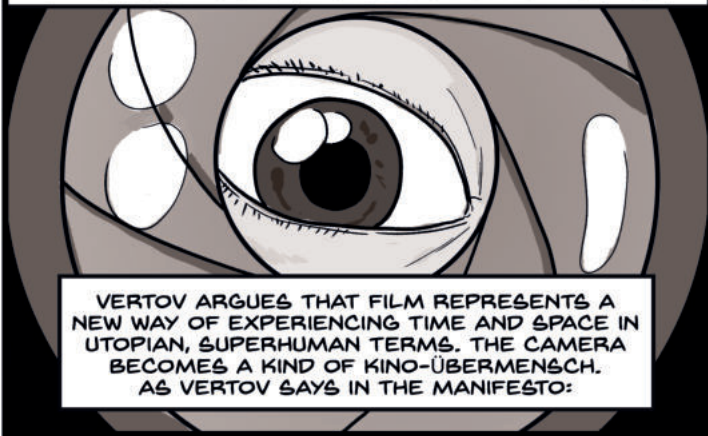
THE UNDERLYING IDEAL OF A PERFECT SUPERBEING AS THE MOST DESIRABLE HUMAN FUTURE PROVIDED A RATIONALE FOR INHUMAN ACTS OF CRUELTY AND VIOLENCE.



THIS IS WHAT IS AT STAKE FOR FOUCAULT IN HIS IDEA OF BIOPOLITICS -- THE POWER OVER LIFE AND DEATH, AND THE CONTROL OF LANGUAGE, INSTITUTIONS AND IDEAS THAT SHAPE OUR IDEAS ABOUT ALL LIFE.

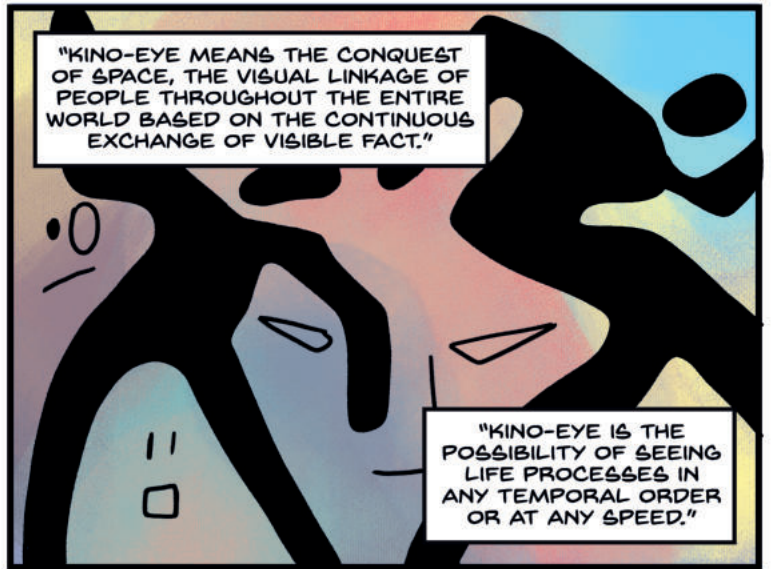


A MORE POSITIVE VISION OF TRANSHUMANIST EVOLUTION, THIS TIME NOT IN TERMS OF THE BODY, BUT CONSCIOUSNESS AND PERCEPTION, WAS DESCRIBED BY THE SOVIET FILMMAKER AND THEORIST DZIGA VERTOV IN HIS KINO-EYE MANIFESTO (1923).



VERTOV ARGUES THAT FILM REPRESENTS A NEW WAY OF EXPERIENCING TIME AND SPACE IN UTOPIAN, SUPERHUMAN TERMS. THE CAMERA BECOMES A KIND OF KINO-ÜBERMENSCH. AS VERTOV SAYS IN THE MANIFESTO:

"KINO-EYE MEANS THE CONQUEST OF SPACE, THE VISUAL LINKAGE OF PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE WORLD BASED ON THE CONTINUOUS EXCHANGE OF VISIBLE FACT."

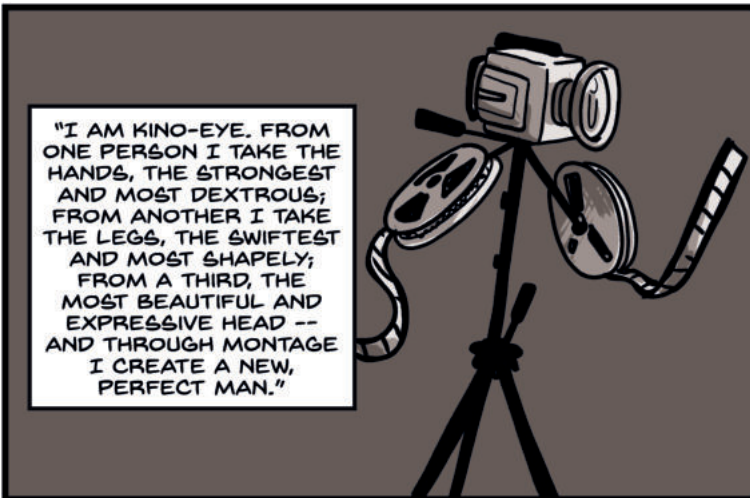


"KINO-EYE IS THE POSSIBILITY OF SEEING LIFE PROCESSES IN ANY TEMPORAL ORDER OR AT ANY SPEED."

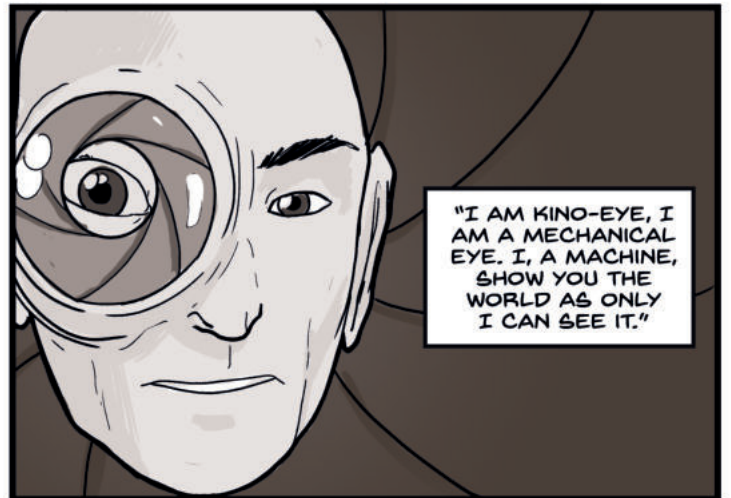
"KINO-EYE USES EVERY POSSIBLE MEANS IN MONTAGE, COMPARING AND LINKING ALL POINTS OF THE UNIVERSE IN ANY TEMPORAL ORDER, BREAKING, WHEN NECESSARY, ALL THE LAWS AND CONVENTIONS OF FILM CONSTRUCTION."



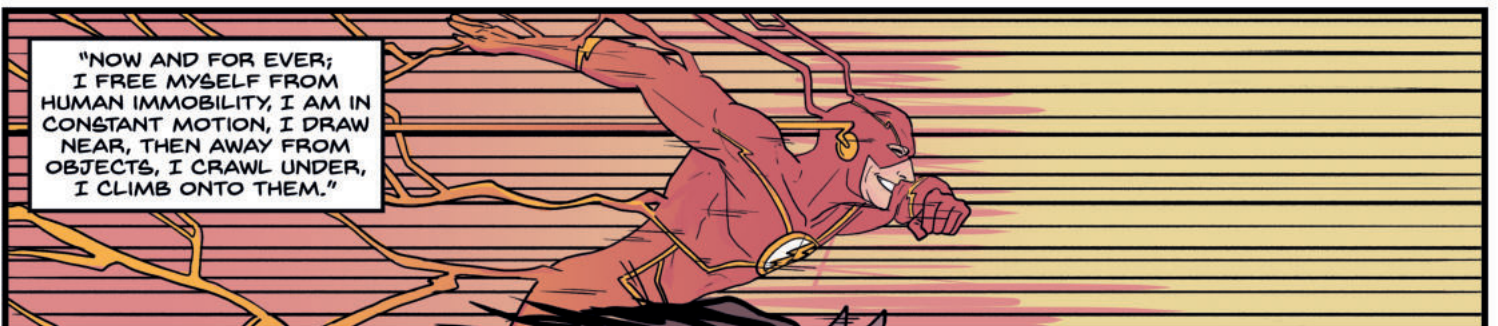
"I AM KINO-EYE. FROM ONE PERSON I TAKE THE HANDS, THE STRONGEST AND MOST DEXTROUS; FROM ANOTHER I TAKE THE LEGS, THE SWIFTEST AND MOST SHAPELY; FROM A THIRD, THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND EXPRESSIVE HEAD -- AND THROUGH MONTAGE I CREATE A NEW, PERFECT MAN."



"I AM KINO-EYE, I AM A MECHANICAL EYE. I, A MACHINE, SHOW YOU THE WORLD AS ONLY I CAN SEE IT."



"NOW AND FOR EVER; I FREE MYSELF FROM HUMAN IMMOBILITY, I AM IN CONSTANT MOTION, I DRAW NEAR, THEN AWAY FROM OBJECTS, I CRAWL UNDER, I CLIMB ONTO THEM."



"I MOVE APACE WITH THE MUZZLE OF A GALLOPING HORSE."







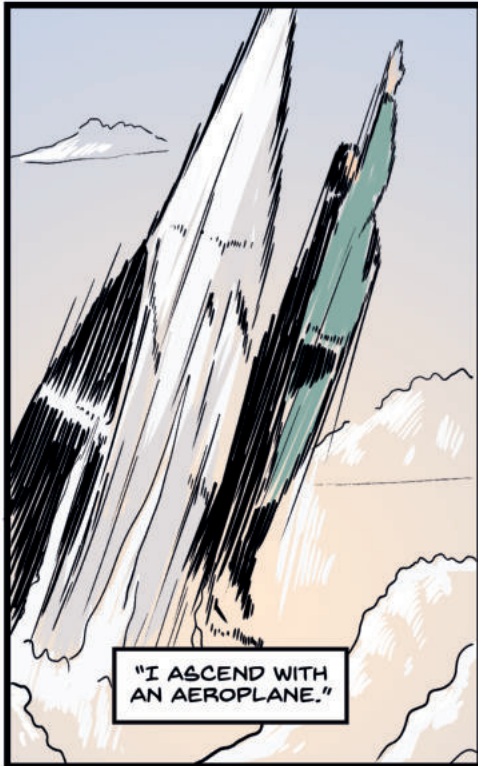
"I PLUNGE FULL SPEED INTO A CROWD."



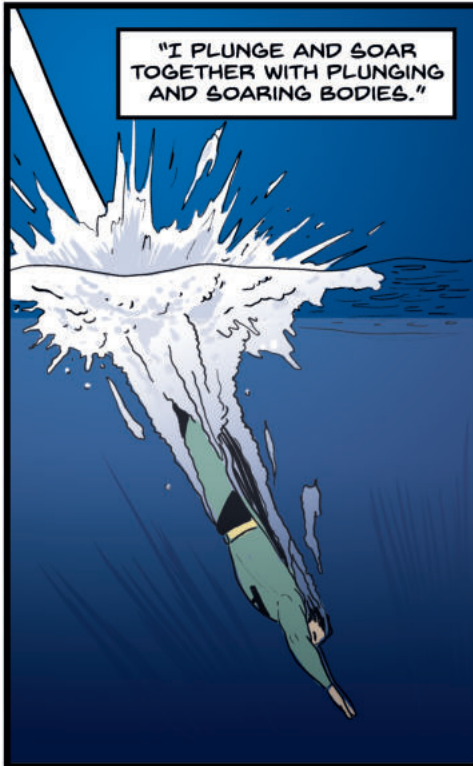
"I OUTSTRIP RUNNING SOLDIERS."



"I FALL ON MY BACK."



"I ASCEND WITH AN AEROPLANE."

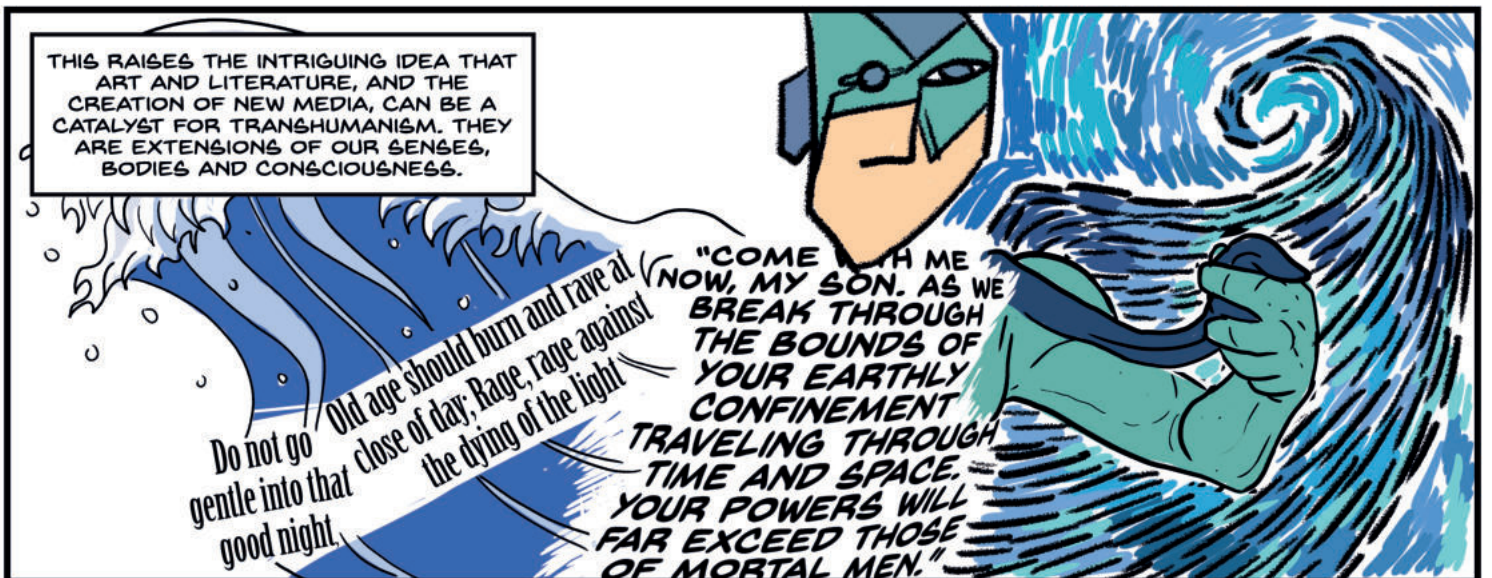


"I PLUNGE AND SOAR TOGETHER WITH PLUNGING AND SOARING BODIES."



"FREE OF THE LIMITS OF TIME AND SPACE, I PUT TOGETHER ANY GIVEN POINTS IN THE UNIVERSE, NO MATTER WHERE I'VE RECORDED THEM."

FOR VERTOV, THE REVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL OF FILM WAS THAT EDITING ENABLED THE VIEWER TO SEE THE WORLD IN NEW WAYS, MIRRORING THE SOVIET DESIRE FOR A BOLD NEW REVOLUTIONARY CONSCIOUSNESS.



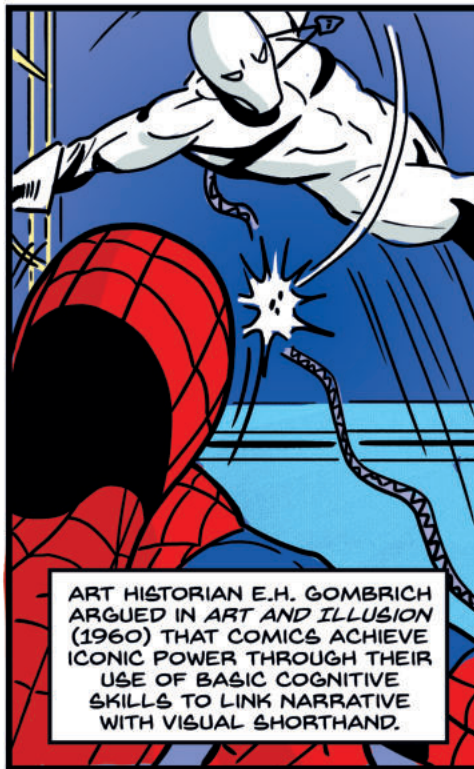
THIS RAISES THE INTRIGUING IDEA THAT ART AND LITERATURE, AND THE CREATION OF NEW MEDIA, CAN BE A CATALYST FOR TRANSHUMANISM. THEY ARE EXTENSIONS OF OUR SENSES, BODIES AND CONSCIOUSNESS.

Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day; Rage, rage against the dying of the light

"COME WITH ME NOW, MY SON. AS WE BREAK THROUGH THE BOUNDS OF YOUR EARTHLY CONFINEMENT TRAVELING THROUGH TIME AND SPACE, YOUR POWERS WILL FAR EXCEED THOSE OF MORTAL MEN."



COMICS, LIKE FILM, HAVE ENORMOUS REVOLUTIONARY AND SUBVERSIVE POTENTIAL. THEY CHALLENGE US TO USE OUR IMAGINATIONS IN UNIQUE WAYS.



ART HISTORIAN E.H. GOMBRICH ARGUED IN *ART AND ILLUSION* (1960) THAT COMICS ACHIEVE ICONIC POWER THROUGH THEIR USE OF BASIC COGNITIVE SKILLS TO LINK NARRATIVE WITH VISUAL SHORTHAND.

IN *UNDERSTANDING MEDIA* (1964) THEORIST MARSHALL MCLUHAN PUT THIS ANOTHER WAY, ARGUING THAT COMICS WERE A 'COOL' MEDIUM, REQUIRING ACTIVE PARTICIPATION FOR THE READER. COMICS GIVE LITTLE FRAGMENTS OF INFORMATION AND READERS HAVE TO FILL IN THE BLANKS.



AS SCOTT MCCLLOUD NOTES IN *UNDERSTANDING COMICS* (1993), THE MEDIUM PRESENTS INFORMATION IN A FRAGMENTED, NON-LINEAR SYSTEM THAT WE CAN INTERPRET IN HIGHLY SUBJECTIVE WAYS.



THE MECHANISM FOR THIS IS CALLED 'CLOSURE'. A PANEL IS NOT LIKE A PHOTOGRAPH, A MOMENT IN TIME, RATHER IT IS A COMPLEX LAYERING OF SIGNS THAT EACH REPRESENT A DIFFERENT MOMENT IN TIME.



COMICS ARE ALSO TIME MACHINES, REPRESENTING TIME AS SPACE.

A READER CAN LOOK AT DIFFERENT PANELS AT DIFFERENT TIMES, MOVING BACK AND FORTH IN THE SUPPOSED READING ORDER--



WHEN WE READ ACROSS A GAP (GUTTER) BETWEEN PANELS, WE ARE REQUIRED TO IMAGINE WHAT HAPPENS. A COMIC, LIKE A FILM, IS A PIECE OF TECHNOLOGY THAT ALLOWS US TO CREATE MEANING.



--SEEING REPRESENTATIONS OF PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE SIMULTANEOUSLY.

COMICS HAVE THE SAME REVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL THAT VERTOV CLAIMED FOR FILM.



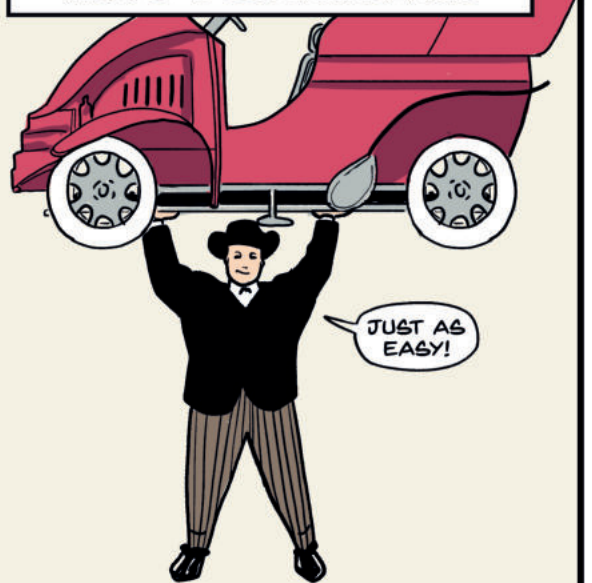
THIS MAY BE A REASON WHY SUPERHEROES HAVE BEEN SO IN POPULAR IN COMICS. THE MEDIUM SERVES AS A VEHICLE FOR EXTENDING HUMAN PERCEPTIONS AND CAPABILITIES THROUGH ITS FORMAL CONVENTIONS.



PERHAPS INSPIRED BY THE POPULARITY OF THE COMING RACE, AND CIRCUS STRONGMEN AND THE EMERGENCE OF BODY-BUILDING CULTURE, ONE OF THE FIRST SUPER-POWERED HEROES OF MODERN TIMES, WAS WILLIAM H.D. KOERNER'S 'HUGO HERCULES', WHO APPEARED IN A COMIC STRIP IN THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE FROM SEPTEMBER 1902 TO JANUARY 1903.



HUGO HAD PRODIGIOUS STRENGTH AND USED HIS POWERS FOR GOOD. HE EVEN HAD A CATCH-PHASE -- "JUST AS EASY". HOWEVER, UNLIKE OTHER SUPERHUMANS THERE WAS NO SUGGESTION THAT HUGO INTENDED TO SUPPLANT HUMANITY.

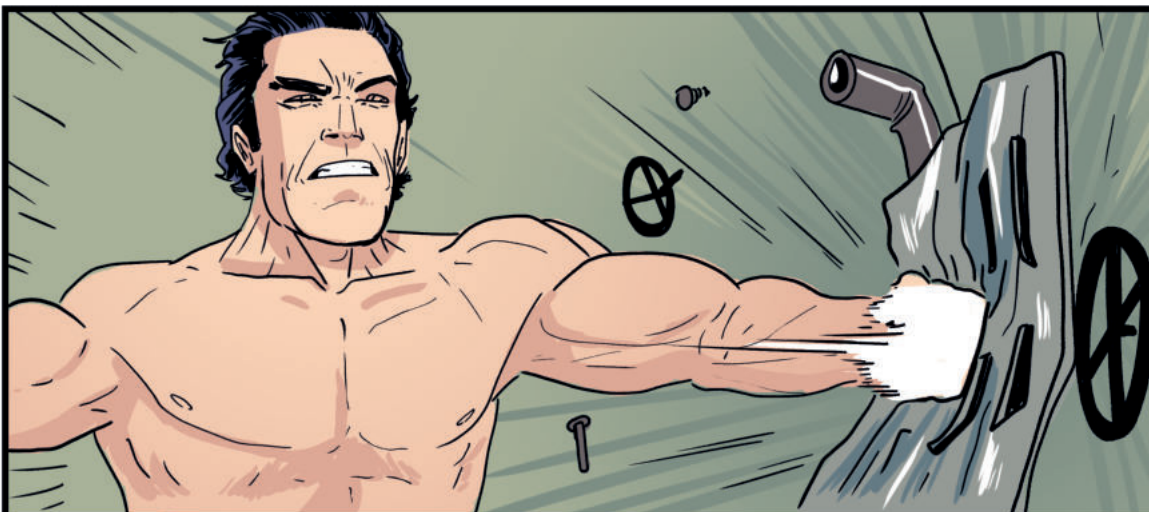


LIKE THE SUPERHEROES WHO WOULD APPEAR IN COMIC BOOKS SEVERAL DECADES LATER, HE WAS AN ALL-AMERICAN HERO.

ANOTHER SUPERPOWERED HUGO APPEARED IN PHILIP WYLIE'S NOVEL *GLADIATOR* (WRITTEN IN 1926 AND PUBLISHED IN 1930). HUGO DANNER'S FATHER, A SCIENTIST, PERFORMS EXPERIMENTS ON HIM WHEN HE IS STILL IN THE WOMB, TRANSFORMING HIM INTO A SUPER-BEING.



HUGO DANNER HAS MIRACULOUS STRENGTH AND IS LARGELY INVULNERABLE. HE DEFEATS THE SCHOOL BULLY, TAKES PART IN WRESTLING MATCHES AND FIGHTS IN WORLD WAR I. IN THIS SENSE HE IS LIKE HUGO HERCULES, BUT THERE WAS A DARKER SIDE.



WYLIE'S NOVEL, LIKE *FRANKENSTEIN* AND *THE COMING RACE*, CONSIDERS THE POSSIBILITY OF SUPERHUMANS BEING OUR EVOLUTIONARY COMPETITORS, USING SELECTIVE BREEDING TO PUSH THEIR ADVANTAGE, POTENTIALLY ENSLAVING OR DESTROYING HUMANITY.



WYLIE ASKS "WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WERE THE STRONGEST MAN IN THE WORLD, THE STRONGEST THING IN THE WORLD, MIGHTIER THAN THE MACHINE?"



I WOULD--  
I WOULD HAVE WON THE WAR. BUT I DID NOT. I WOULD RUN THE UNIVERSE SINGLE-HANDED. LITERALLY SINGLE-HANDED. I WOULD SCORN THE UNIVERSE AND TURN IT TO MY OWN ENDS.

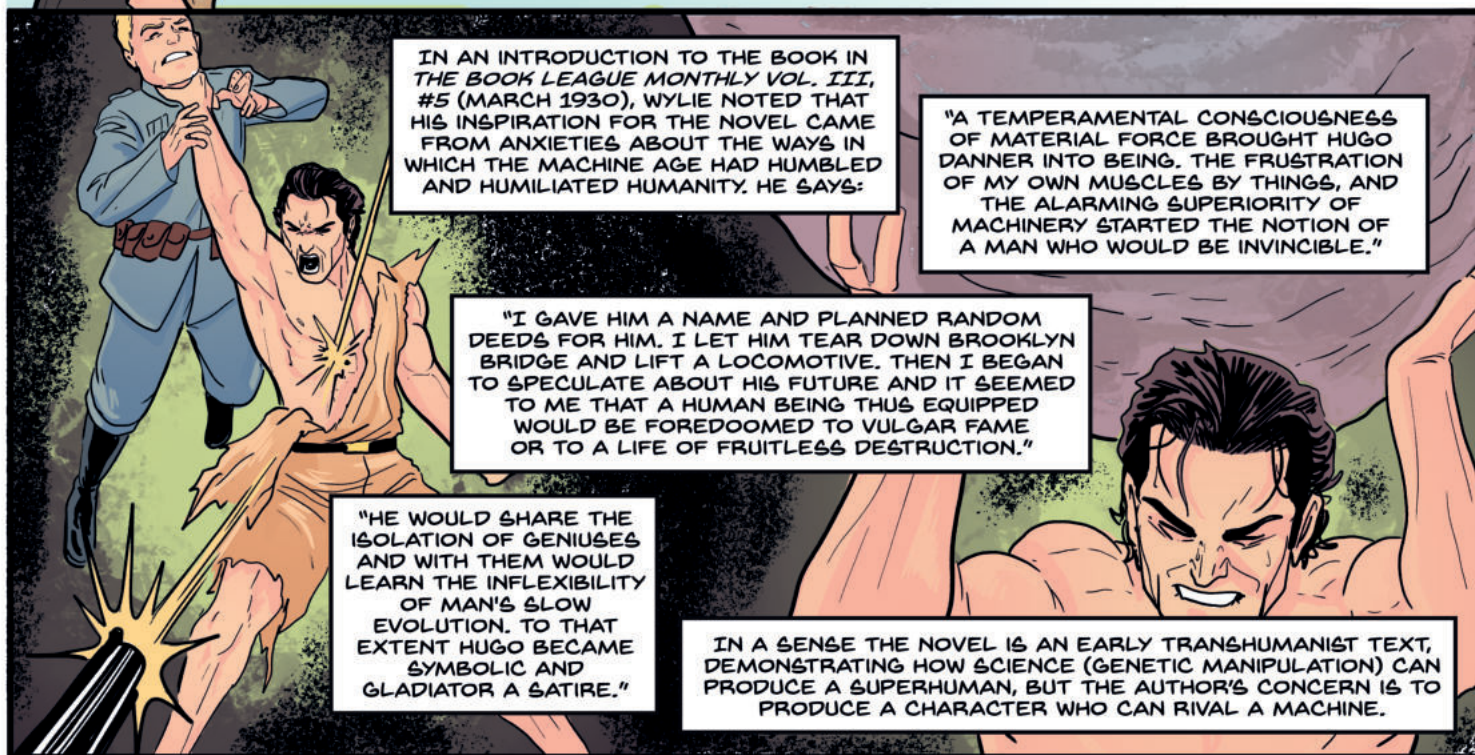
I WOULD BE A CRIMINAL. I WOULD RIP OPEN BANKS AND GUT THEM. I WOULD KILL AND DESTROY. I WOULD BE A SECRET, INVISIBLE BLIGHT.

I WOULD SET OUT TO STAMP CRIME OFF THE EARTH; I WOULD BE A SUPER-DETECTIVE, FOLLOWING AND SUMMARILY PUNISHING EVERY CRIMINAL UNTIL NO ONE DARED TO COMMIT A FELONY.

WHAT WOULD I DO?

WHAT WILL I DO?

DANNER IS TRAPPED BETWEEN BEING A LAST MAN AND AN OVERMAN. HIS INDECISION MIRRORS AN AMBIGUITY WITHIN THE BOOK. IS DANNER THE LAST, MOST PERFECT EXPRESSION OF AN AGE OLD CHARACTER TYPE -- THE GLADIATOR -- OR IS HE SOMETHING NEW ENTIRELY?



IN AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK IN THE BOOK LEAGUE MONTHLY VOL. III, #5 (MARCH 1930), WYLIE NOTED THAT HIS INSPIRATION FOR THE NOVEL CAME FROM ANXIETIES ABOUT THE WAYS IN WHICH THE MACHINE AGE HAD HUMILED AND HUMILIATED HUMANITY. HE SAYS:

"A TEMPERAMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF MATERIAL FORCE BROUGHT HUGO DANNER INTO BEING. THE FRUSTRATION OF MY OWN MUSCLES BY THINGS, AND THE ALARMING SUPERIORITY OF MACHINERY STARTED THE NOTION OF A MAN WHO WOULD BE INVINCIBLE."

"I GAVE HIM A NAME AND PLANNED RANDOM DEEDS FOR HIM. I LET HIM TEAR DOWN BROOKLYN BRIDGE AND LIFT A LOCOMOTIVE. THEN I BEGAN TO SPECULATE ABOUT HIS FUTURE AND IT SEEMED TO ME THAT A HUMAN BEING THUS EQUIPPED WOULD BE FOREDOOMED TO VULGAR FAME OR TO A LIFE OF FRUITLESS DESTRUCTION."

"HE WOULD SHARE THE ISOLATION OF GENIUSES AND WITH THEM WOULD LEARN THE INFLEXIBILITY OF MAN'S SLOW EVOLUTION. TO THAT EXTENT HUGO BECAME SYMBOLIC AND GLADIATOR A SATIRE."

IN A SENSE THE NOVEL IS AN EARLY TRANSHUMANIST TEXT, DEMONSTRATING HOW SCIENCE (GENETIC MANIPULATION) CAN PRODUCE A SUPERHUMAN, BUT THE AUTHOR'S CONCERN IS TO PRODUCE A CHARACTER WHO CAN RIVAL A MACHINE.

TOWARDS THE END OF THE STORY HUGO BEFRIENDS A SCIENTIST WHO TELLS HIM THAT SHOULD TRY TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD.



DISTRAUGHT, HUGO CLIMBS A MOUNTAIN ALONE AND ASKS WHETHER HE HAS THE RIGHT TO QUESTION GOD. AS IF IN ANSWER A LIGHTNING BOLT STRIKES HIM, KILLING HIM INSTANTLY.



IS THIS DIVINE INTERVENTION OR JUST A RANDOM ACT OF NATURE? IN THE END, IT DOESN'T MATTER.

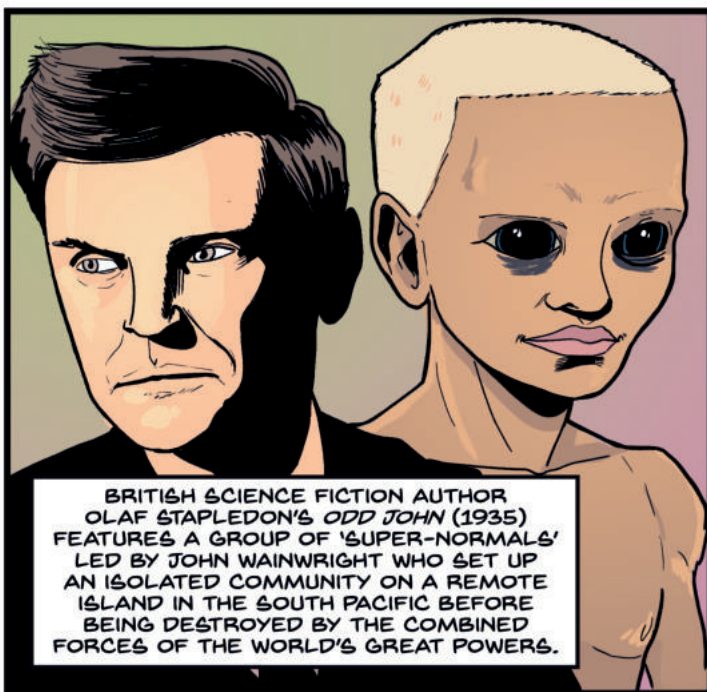
DANNER REVEALS HIMSELF AS LIMITED AND CAUGHT WITHIN THE CONTEXT THAT CREATED HIM BY HIS APPEAL TO A HIGHER POWER. A NEITZSCHEAN OVERMAN, UNDERSTANDING THAT GOD IS DEAD, WOULD RELY ONLY ON THEIR OWN WILL TO POWER.

BY THIS TIME THE FIGURE OF THE COSTUMED ADVENTURER WAS A COMMON FEATURE OF POPULAR CULTURE, WITH NOTABLE EXAMPLES BEING THE PHANTOM AND DOC SAVAGE.



THE AGE OF THE SUPERHERO WAS DAWNING... BUT SCIENCE FICTION WAS STILL OFFERING WARNINGS ABOUT THE COMING OF THE POST-HUMANS.



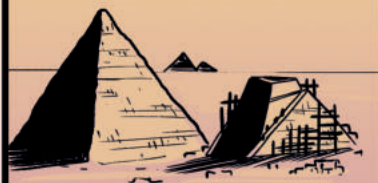


BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION AUTHOR OLAF STAPLEDON'S *ODD JOHN* (1935) FEATURES A GROUP OF 'SUPER-NORMALS' LED BY JOHN WAINWRIGHT WHO SET UP AN ISOLATED COMMUNITY ON A REMOTE ISLAND IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC BEFORE BEING DESTROYED BY THE COMBINED FORCES OF THE WORLD'S GREAT POWERS.

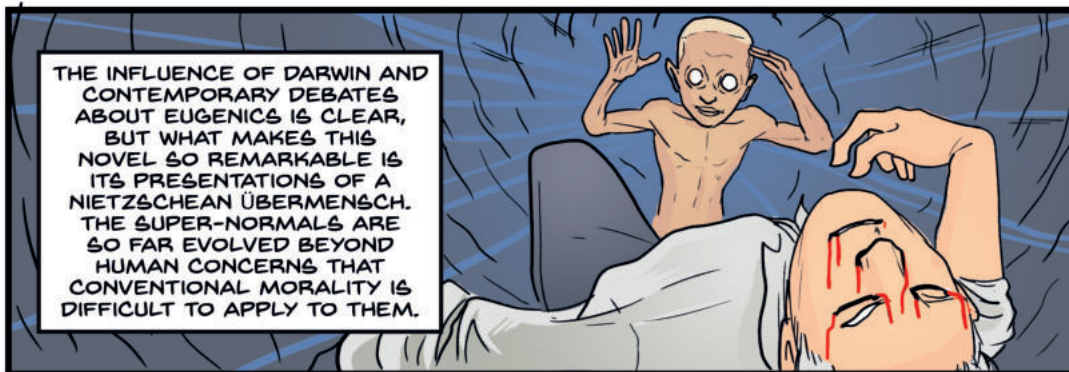
THE SUPER-NORMALS ARE STRANGE CREATURES. THEY HAVE LARGE EYES, ARE EXTREMELY LONG-LIVED, AND HAVE POWERFUL TELEPATHIC AND TELEKINETIC ABILITIES.



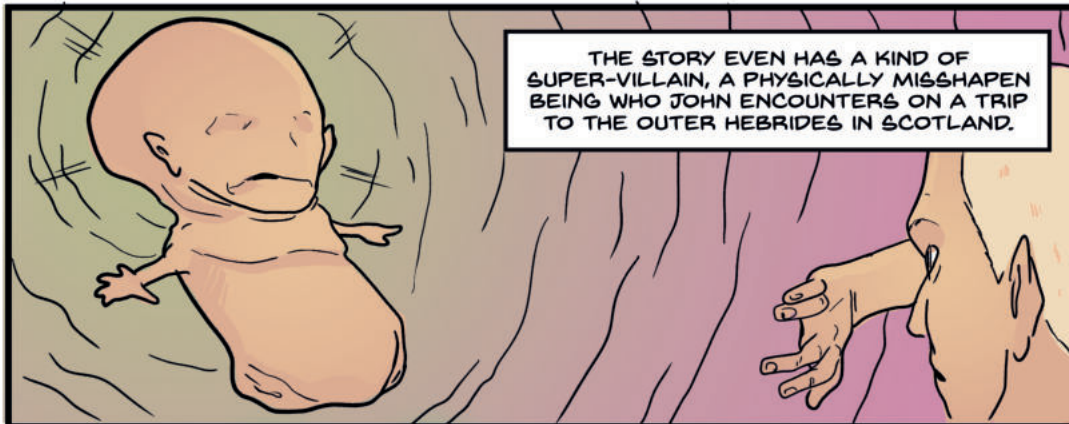
JOHN AND THE SUPER-NORMALS CAN ALSO PROJECT THEIR CONSCIOUSNESS THROUGH TIME.



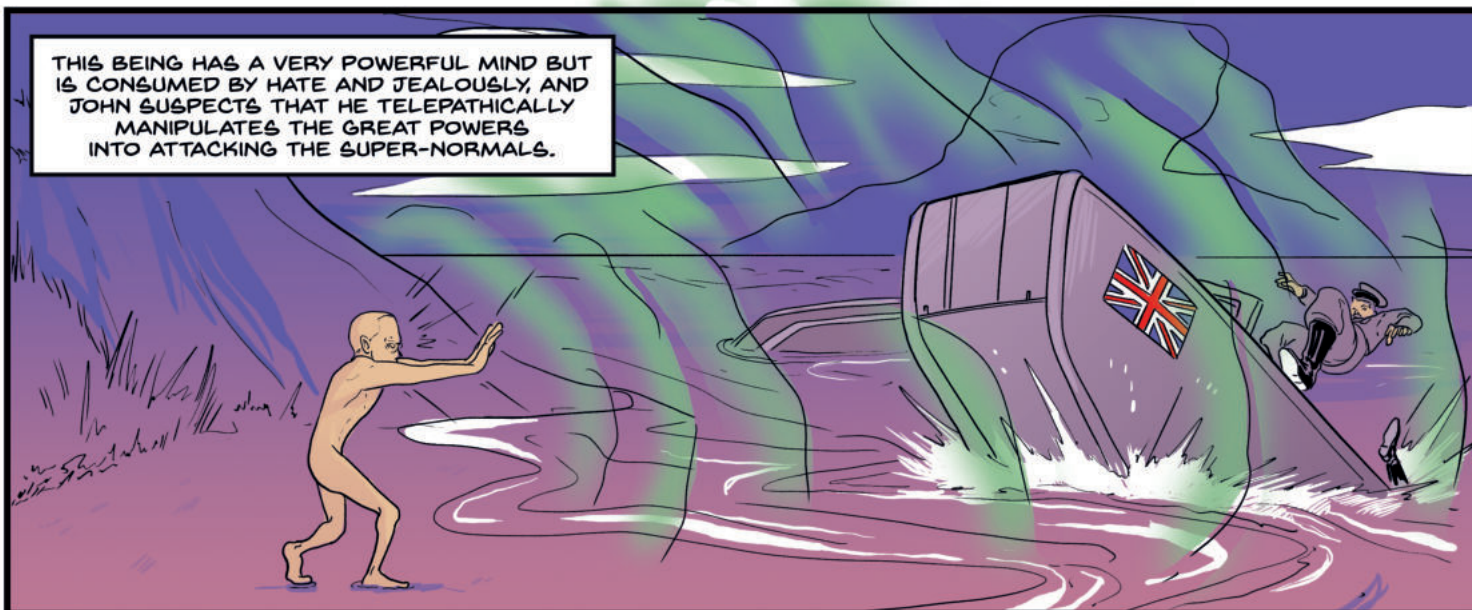
THE INFLUENCE OF DARWIN AND CONTEMPORARY DEBATES ABOUT EUGENICS IS CLEAR, BUT WHAT MAKES THIS NOVEL SO REMARKABLE IS ITS PRESENTATIONS OF A NIETZSCHEAN ÜBERMENSCH. THE SUPER-NORMALS ARE SO FAR EVOLVED BEYOND HUMAN CONCERNS THAT CONVENTIONAL MORALITY IS DIFFICULT TO APPLY TO THEM.



THE STORY EVEN HAS A KIND OF SUPER-VILLAIN, A PHYSICALLY MISSHAPEN BEING WHO JOHN ENCOUNTERS ON A TRIP TO THE OUTER HEBRIDES IN SCOTLAND.



THIS BEING HAS A VERY POWERFUL MIND BUT IS CONSUMED BY HATE AND JEALOUSY, AND JOHN SUSPECTS THAT HE TELEPATHICALLY MANIPULATES THE GREAT POWERS INTO ATTACKING THE SUPER-NORMALS.



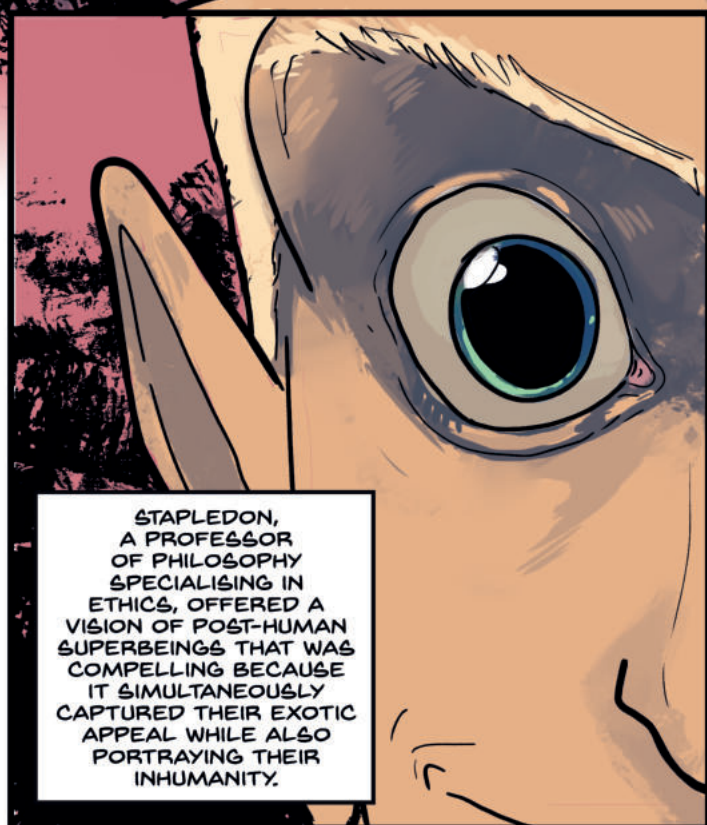


AT ONE POINT JOHN TELLS THE HUMAN NARRATOR THAT HE HAS CONTEMPLATED GENOCIDE:

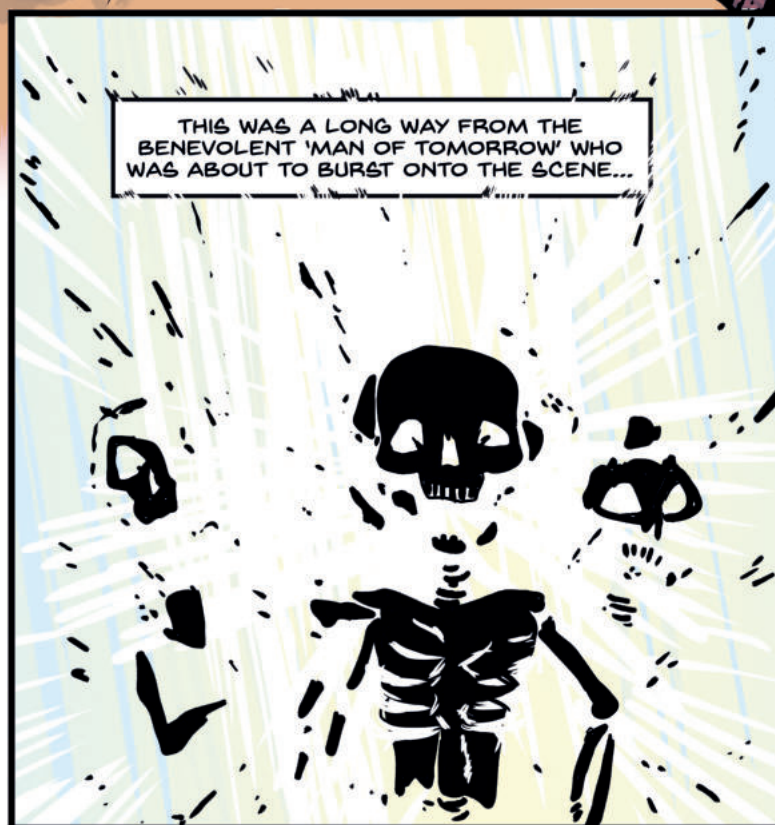
WELL, IF WE COULD WIPE OUT YOUR WHOLE SPECIES, FRANKLY, WE WOULD. FOR IF YOUR SPECIES DISCOVERS US, AND REALISES AT ALL WHAT WE ARE, IT WILL CERTAINLY DESTROY US.

AND WE KNOW, YOU MUST REMEMBER, THAT HOMO SAPIENS HAS LITTLE MORE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE MUSIC OF THIS PLANET, NOTHING IN FACT BUT VAIN REPETITION.

IT IS TIME FOR FINER INSTRUMENTS TO TAKE UP THE THEME.



STAPLEDON, A PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY SPECIALISING IN ETHICS, OFFERED A VISION OF POST-HUMAN SUPERBEINGS THAT WAS COMPELLING BECAUSE IT SIMULTANEOUSLY CAPTURED THEIR EXOTIC APPEAL WHILE ALSO PORTRAYING THEIR INHUMANITY.



THIS WAS A LONG WAY FROM THE BENEVOLENT 'MAN OF TOMORROW' WHO WAS ABOUT TO BURST ONTO THE SCENE...





AND THEN CAME  
SUPERMAN.

DESPITE THE LONG HISTORY OF THE  
SUPERHUMAN, ACTION COMICS #1  
(1938) ANNOUNCED THE ARRIVAL  
OF THE AGE OF THE SUPERHERO.



SUPERMAN IS A  
MYTHOLOGICAL  
FIGURE WITH SCIENCE  
FICTION TROPES.

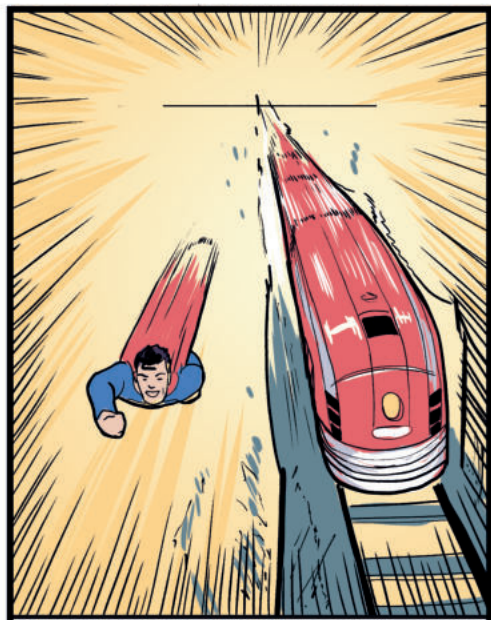


IN THE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL  
NEWSPAPER STRIP WHICH  
APPEARED IN 1939 IT IS  
NOTED THAT KRYPTONIANS  
ARE SIGNIFICANTLY ADVANCED  
IN EVOLUTION.

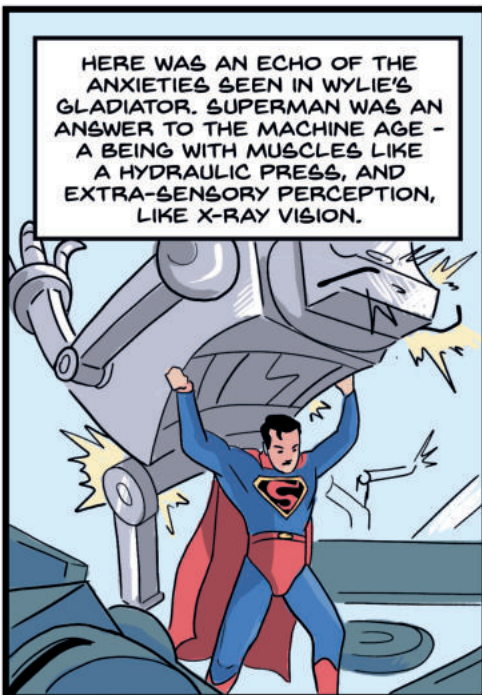
LATER STORIES WOULD DISMISS  
THE IMPLICATION OF GENETIC  
SUPERIORITY AND EXPLAIN  
THAT SUPERMAN HAS AN ALIEN  
CELL STRUCTURE THAT IS  
CHARGED BY SOLAR POWER.



DESPITE THE EARLY NOD TO  
EUGENICS, SUPERMAN WAS  
ORIGINALLY PRESENTED AS  
AN EXPLICIT REBUTTAL TO  
THE NAZI ARYAN IDEAL.



THE SUPERMAN RADIO SHOW ALSO  
ADDED SOME KEY ELEMENTS TO  
THE MYTH, NOTING THAT THE HERO  
WAS 'FASTER THAN A SPEEDING  
BULLET! MORE POWERFUL THAN A  
LOCOMOTIVE! ABLE TO LEAP TALL  
BUILDINGS IN A SINGLE BOUND!'



HERE WAS AN ECHO OF THE  
ANXIETIES SEEN IN WYLIE'S  
GLADIATOR. SUPERMAN WAS AN  
ANSWER TO THE MACHINE AGE -  
A BEING WITH MUSCLES LIKE  
A HYDRAULIC PRESS, AND  
EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTION,  
LIKE X-RAY VISION.

ALL THE STRENGTHS OF THE MACHINE  
AND THE PERCEPTUAL ADVANTAGES  
OF THE KINO-EYE WERE MADE FLESH  
IN THE BODY OF THE 'MAN OF STEEL'.

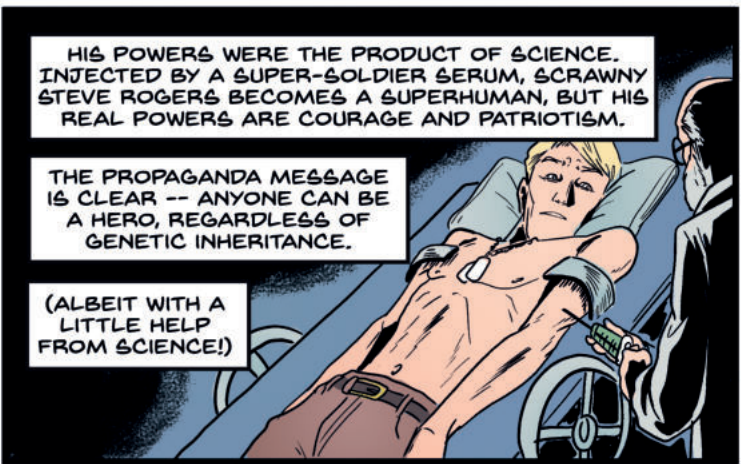


THIS ARCHETYPAL SUPERHERO SOON  
GATHERED A PANTHEON AROUND HIM.





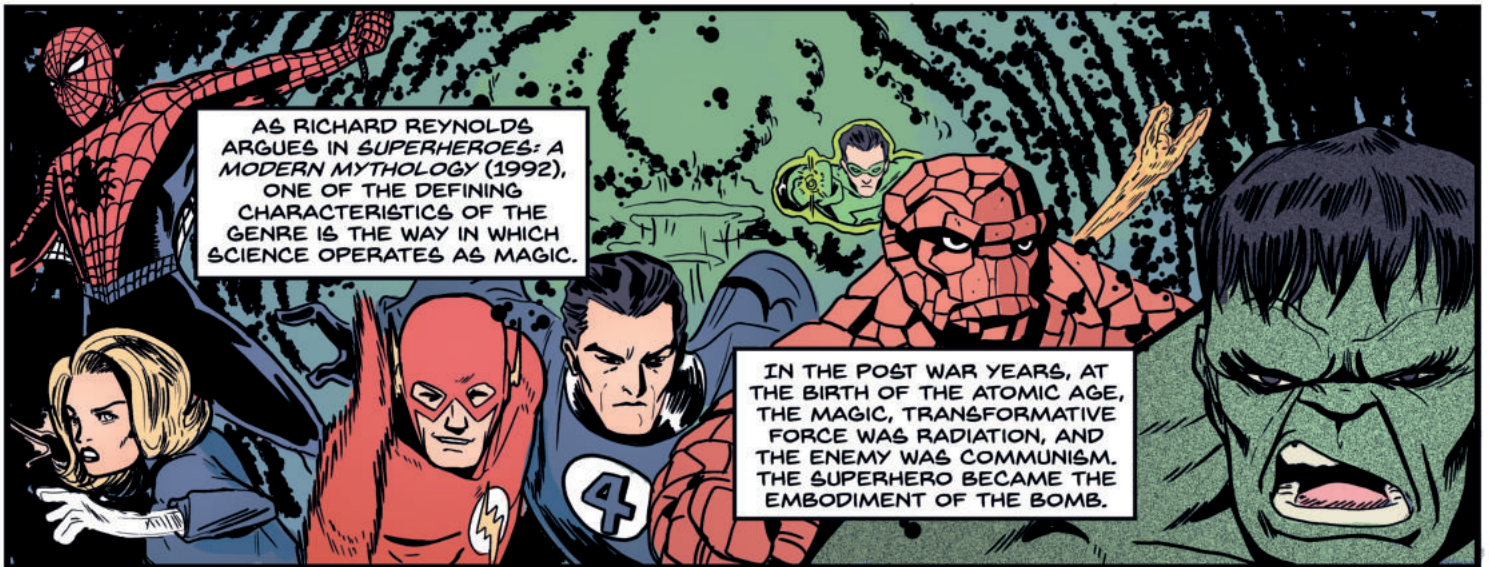
CAPTAIN AMERICA REPRESENTED ANOTHER REBUTTAL TO THE RACIST IDEOLOGY OF THE NAZIS.



HIS POWERS WERE THE PRODUCT OF SCIENCE. INJECTED BY A SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM, SCRAWNY STEVE ROGERS BECOMES A SUPERHUMAN, BUT HIS REAL POWERS ARE COURAGE AND PATRIOTISM.

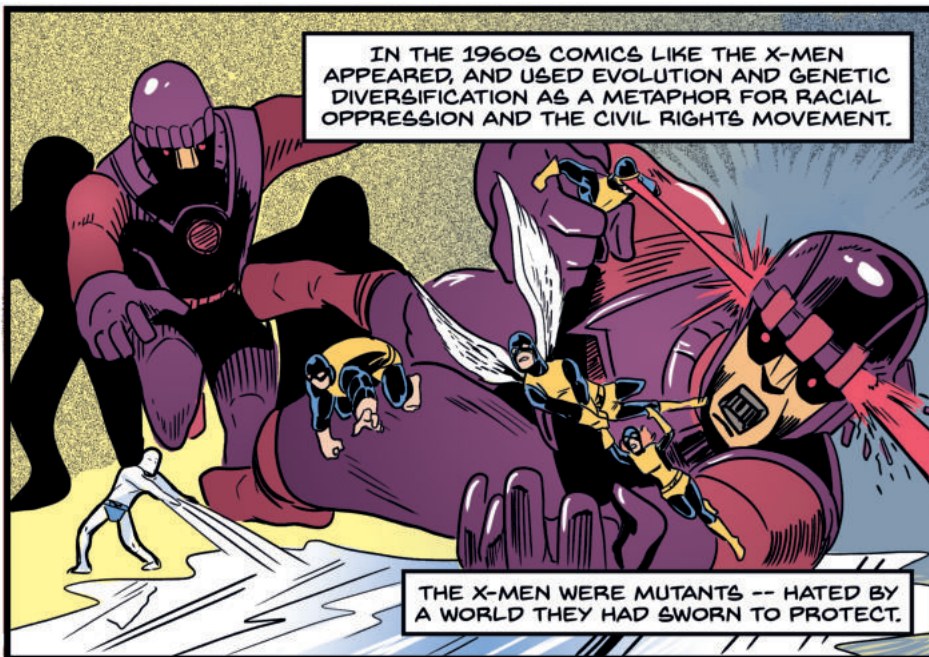
THE PROPAGANDA MESSAGE IS CLEAR -- ANYONE CAN BE A HERO, REGARDLESS OF GENETIC INHERITANCE.

(ALBEIT WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM SCIENCE!)



AS RICHARD REYNOLDS ARGUES IN *SUPERHEROES: A MODERN MYTHOLOGY* (1992), ONE OF THE DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GENRE IS THE WAY IN WHICH SCIENCE OPERATES AS MAGIC.

IN THE POST WAR YEARS, AT THE BIRTH OF THE ATOMIC AGE, THE MAGIC, TRANSFORMATIVE FORCE WAS RADIATION, AND THE ENEMY WAS COMMUNISM. THE SUPERHERO BECAME THE EMBODIMENT OF THE BOMB.

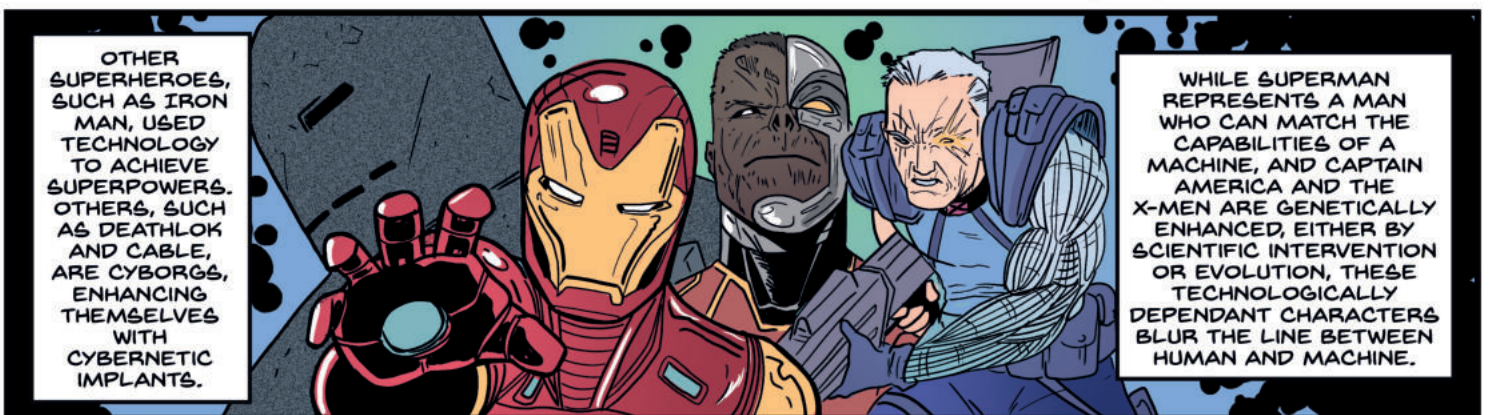


IN THE 1960S COMICS LIKE THE X-MEN APPEARED, AND USED EVOLUTION AND GENETIC DIVERSIFICATION AS A METAPHOR FOR RACIAL OPPRESSION AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT.

THE X-MEN WERE MUTANTS -- HATED BY A WORLD THEY HAD SWORN TO PROTECT.



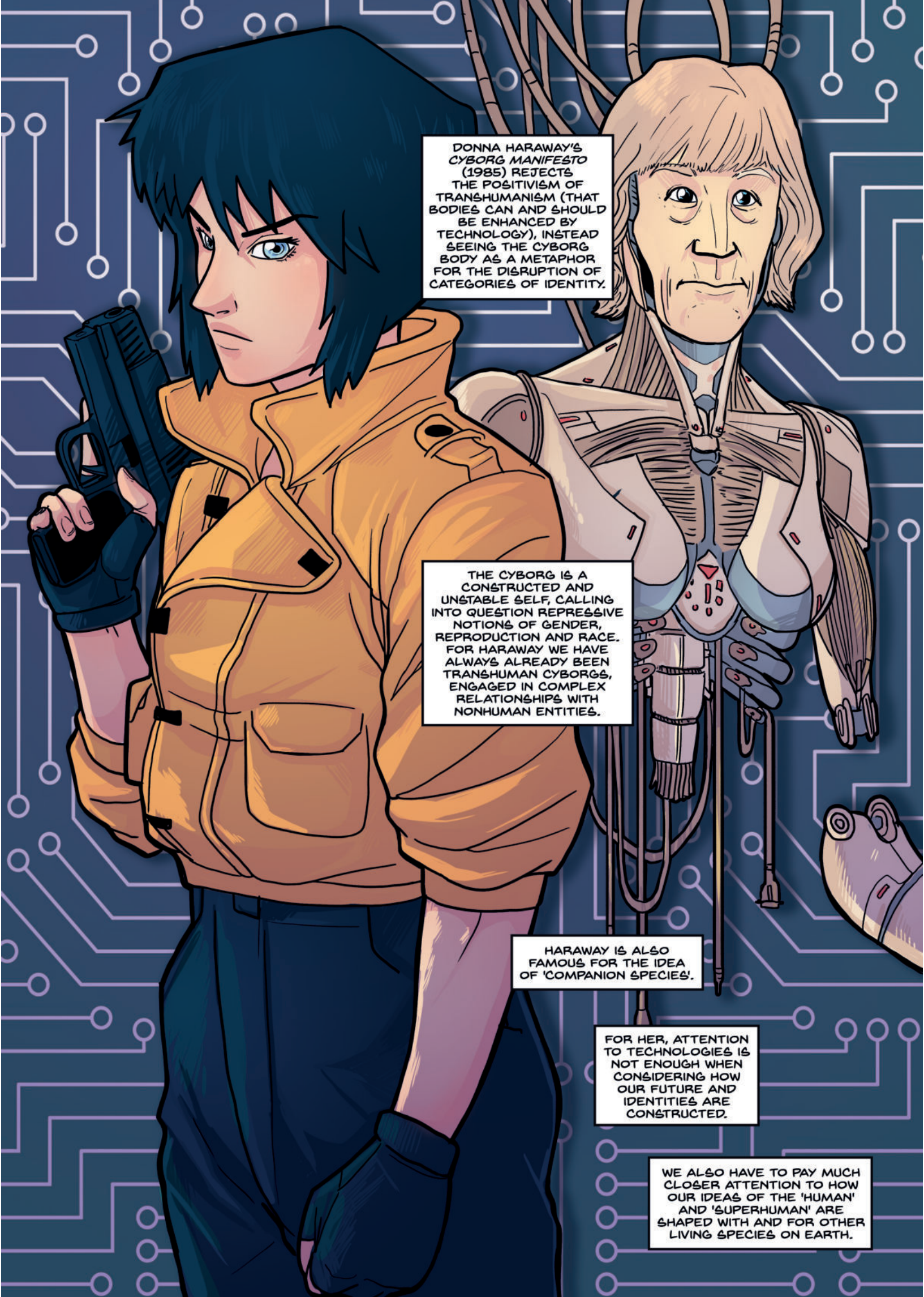
THE BRUTALITY OF RACISM AND THE MACHINE AGE WERE FUSED IN THE SENTINELS, ROBOTS WHO IN ONE STORYLINE SET IN THE FUTURE, *DAYS OF FUTURE PAST* (1981) HUNTED AND EXTERMINATED MUTANTS IN AN ECHO OF THE NAZIS' FINAL SOLUTION.



OTHER SUPERHEROES, SUCH AS IRON MAN, USED TECHNOLOGY TO ACHIEVE SUPERPOWERS. OTHERS, SUCH AS DEATHLOK AND CABLE, ARE CYBORGS, ENHANCING THEMSELVES WITH CYBERNETIC IMPLANTS.

WHILE SUPERMAN REPRESENTS A MAN WHO CAN MATCH THE CAPABILITIES OF A MACHINE, AND CAPTAIN AMERICA AND THE X-MEN ARE GENETICALLY ENHANCED, EITHER BY SCIENTIFIC INTERVENTION OR EVOLUTION, THESE TECHNOLOGICALLY DEPENDANT CHARACTERS BLUR THE LINE BETWEEN HUMAN AND MACHINE.





DONNA HARAWAY'S *CYBORG MANIFESTO* (1985) REJECTS THE POSITIVISM OF TRANSHUMANISM (THAT BODIES CAN AND SHOULD BE ENHANCED BY TECHNOLOGY), INSTEAD SEEING THE CYBORG BODY AS A METAPHOR FOR THE DISRUPTION OF CATEGORIES OF IDENTITY.

THE CYBORG IS A CONSTRUCTED AND UNSTABLE SELF, CALLING INTO QUESTION REPRESSIVE NOTIONS OF GENDER, REPRODUCTION AND RACE. FOR HARAWAY WE HAVE ALWAYS ALREADY BEEN TRANSHUMAN CYBORGS, ENGAGED IN COMPLEX RELATIONSHIPS WITH NONHUMAN ENTITIES.

HARAWAY IS ALSO FAMOUS FOR THE IDEA OF 'COMPANION SPECIES'.

FOR HER, ATTENTION TO TECHNOLOGIES IS NOT ENOUGH WHEN CONSIDERING HOW OUR FUTURE AND IDENTITIES ARE CONSTRUCTED.

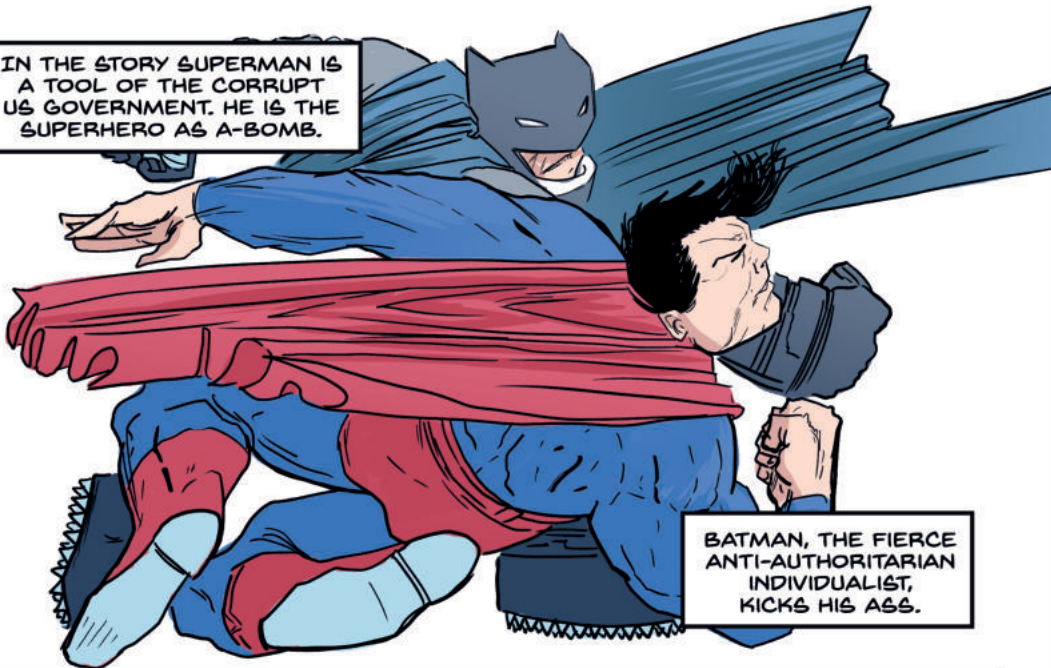
WE ALSO HAVE TO PAY MUCH CLOSER ATTENTION TO HOW OUR IDEAS OF THE 'HUMAN' AND 'SUPERHUMAN' ARE SHAPED WITH AND FOR OTHER LIVING SPECIES ON EARTH.



BY THE 1980S THE POLITICS OF THE SUPERHERO GENRE CAME INCREASINGLY TO THE FORE. IN FRANK MILLER'S *THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS* (1986) BATMAN COMES OUT OF RETIREMENT TO DIE, BUT IS REJUVENATED BY HIS REDISCOVERY OF A NIETZSCHEAN 'WILL TO POWER'.

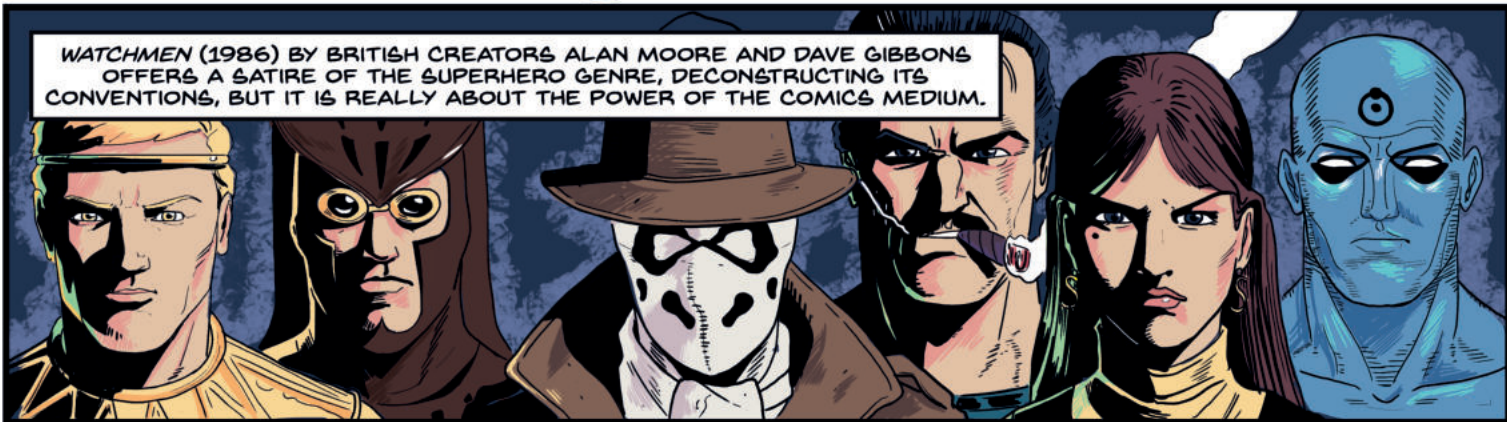


IN THE STORY SUPERMAN IS A TOOL OF THE CORRUPT US GOVERNMENT. HE IS THE SUPERHERO AS A-BOMB.

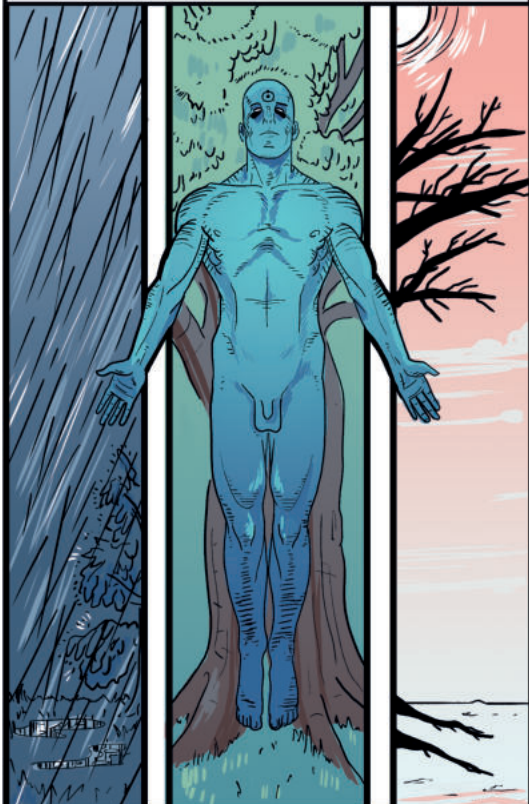


BATMAN, THE FIERCE ANTI-AUTHORITARIAN INDIVIDUALIST, KICKS HIS ASS.

*WATCHMEN* (1986) BY BRITISH CREATORS ALAN MOORE AND DAVE GIBBONS OFFERS A SATIRE OF THE SUPERHERO GENRE, DECONSTRUCTING ITS CONVENTIONS, BUT IT IS REALLY ABOUT THE POWER OF THE COMICS MEDIUM.



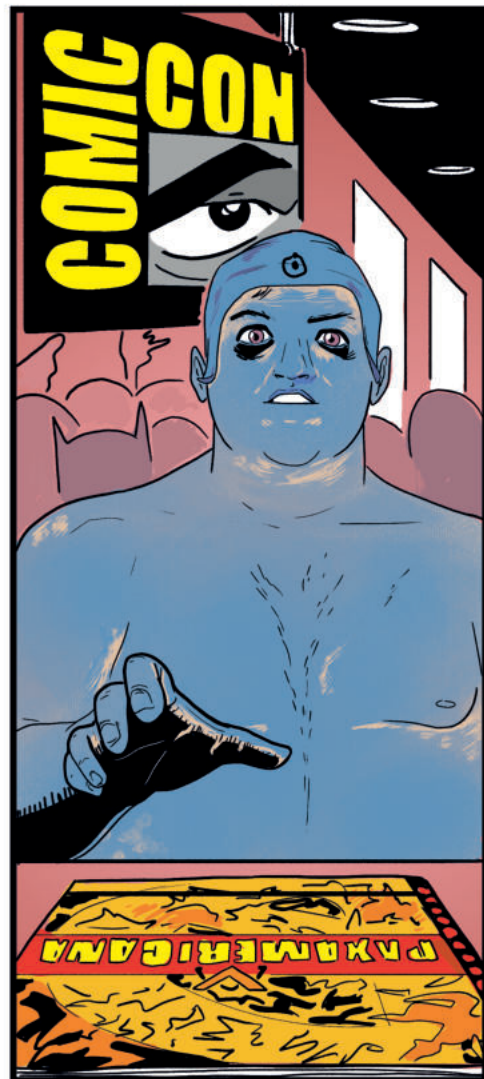
THE POWERS OF THE ONLY TRUE SUPERHUMAN, DR. MANHATTAN, REFLECT THE FORMAL QUALITIES OF THE MEDIUM. A NUCLEAR EXPLOSION ALTERS HIS BEING AND PERCEPTIONS.



HE EXPERIENCES ALL TIME AT ONCE, REPRESENTING THE POWER OF THE COMICS MEDIUM TO PLAY WITH TIME AND SPACE.



JUST AS VERTOV'S CONCEPT OF KINO-EYE MOBILISES THE POWER OF FILM AS A METAPHOR FOR A NEW TECHNOLOGICALLY MEDIATED CONSCIOUSNESS, MOORE AND GIBBONS EXPLORE THE RADICAL POTENTIAL OF COMICS, AND THE PRIMAL TECHNOLOGY OF WORD AND IMAGE.





GRANT MORRISON AND FRANK QUITELY'S *ALL-STAR SUPERMAN* (2005-2008) CELEBRATES THE MYTH OF SUPERMAN, EQUATING HIM WITH THE SUN GOD APOLLO AND THE LABOURS OF HERCULES.



AS SUPERMAN FACES HIS END, HE ALSO ACKNOWLEDGES HIS ROLE AS A PROMETHEAN BENEFACTOR OF HUMANITY, AND INSPIRATION FOR SOCIAL, ETHICAL AND PHYSICAL EVOLUTION.

MORRISON NOTES IN HIS BOOK *SUPERGODS* (2012) THAT FOR HIM THE APPEAL OF SUPERHEROES WAS THAT THEY WERE A PURE REPRESENTATION OF HUMAN PERFECTIBILITY IN THE ERA OF THE COLD WAR.

SUPERHEROES COULD DO WHAT NORMAL PEOPLE COULDN'T -- BEAT THE BOMB.

AS SUPERMAN'S FATHER TELLS HIM IN *ALL-STAR SUPERMAN*: "YOU HAVE GIVEN THEM AN IDEAL TO ASPIRE TO, EMBODIED THEIR HIGHEST ASPIRATIONS. THEY WILL RACE, AND STUMBLE, AND FALL AND CRAWL... AND CURSE... AND FINALLY... THEY WILL JOIN YOU IN THE SUN, KAL-EL. IN TIME, YOU WILL NO LONGER BE ALONE."



IN RECENT YEARS SUPERHERO FILMS HAVE ENJOYED ENORMOUS SUCCESS AND POPULARITY.

ZACK SYNDER'S *MAN OF STEEL* (2013) WENT BACK TO THE THEMES OF THE ORIGINAL STORIES FROM THE 1930s, PRESENTING KRYPTONIANS AS ARCH EUGENICISTS, CREATING CHILDREN TO FULFIL SPECIFIC ROLES. SUPERMAN'S PARENTS DEFY CONVENTION AND CONCEIVE NATURALLY.

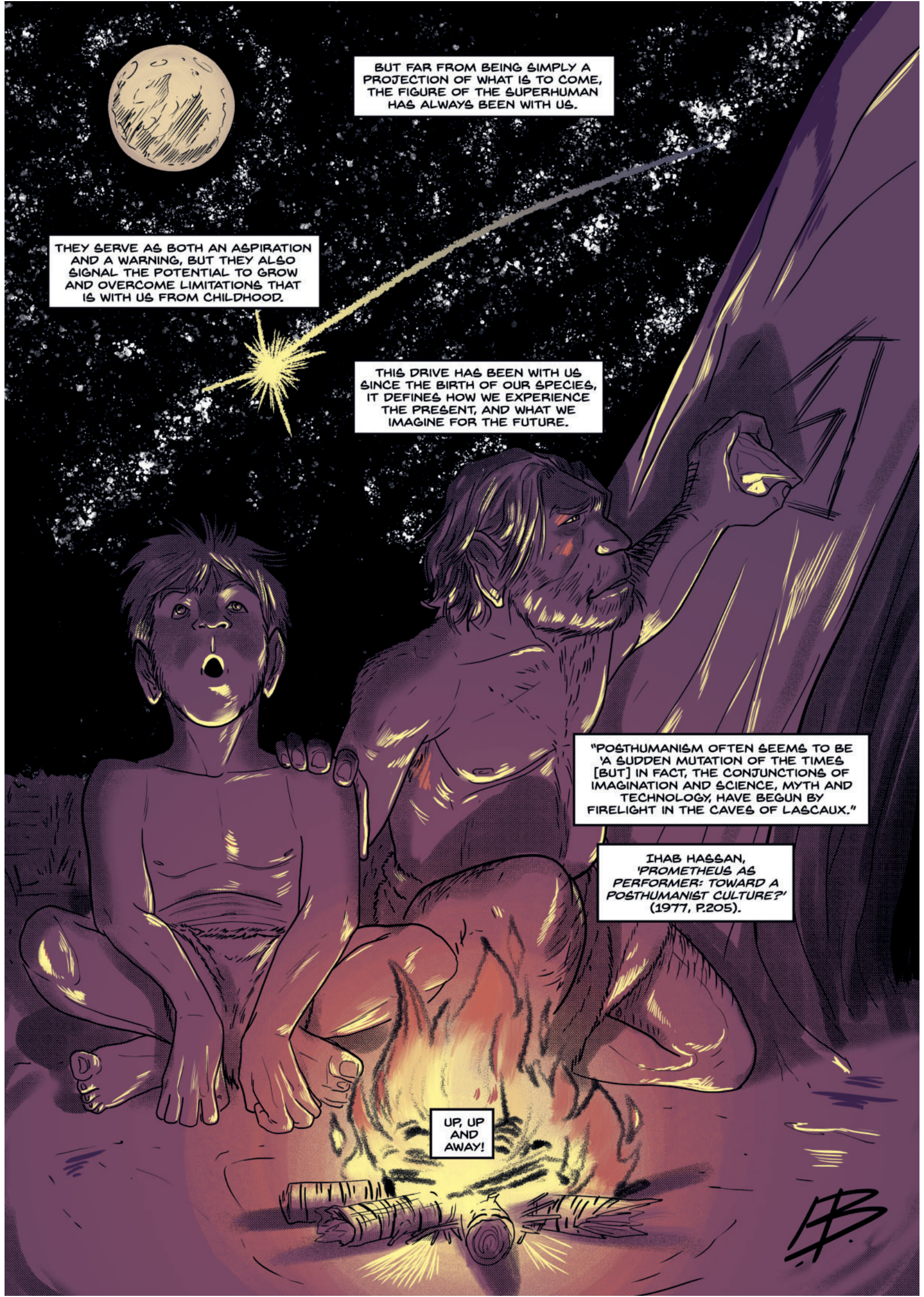


WHEN GENERAL ZOD TRIES TO IMPOSE HIS FASCISTIC RULE AND KRYPTONIAN EUGENICS ON EARTH, SUPERMAN, THE SUPER-IMMIGRANT, SEEKS A DIFFERENT FUTURE FOR HIS ADOPTED WORLD.



STORIES OF SUPERHUMANS HAVE ALWAYS SERVED AS METAPHORS FOR OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FUTURE.





BUT FAR FROM BEING SIMPLY A  
PROJECTION OF WHAT IS TO COME,  
THE FIGURE OF THE SUPERHUMAN  
HAS ALWAYS BEEN WITH US.

THEY SERVE AS BOTH AN ASPIRATION  
AND A WARNING, BUT THEY ALSO  
SIGNAL THE POTENTIAL TO GROW  
AND OVERCOME LIMITATIONS THAT  
IS WITH US FROM CHILDHOOD.

THIS DRIVE HAS BEEN WITH US  
SINCE THE BIRTH OF OUR SPECIES,  
IT DEFINES HOW WE EXPERIENCE  
THE PRESENT, AND WHAT WE  
IMAGINE FOR THE FUTURE.

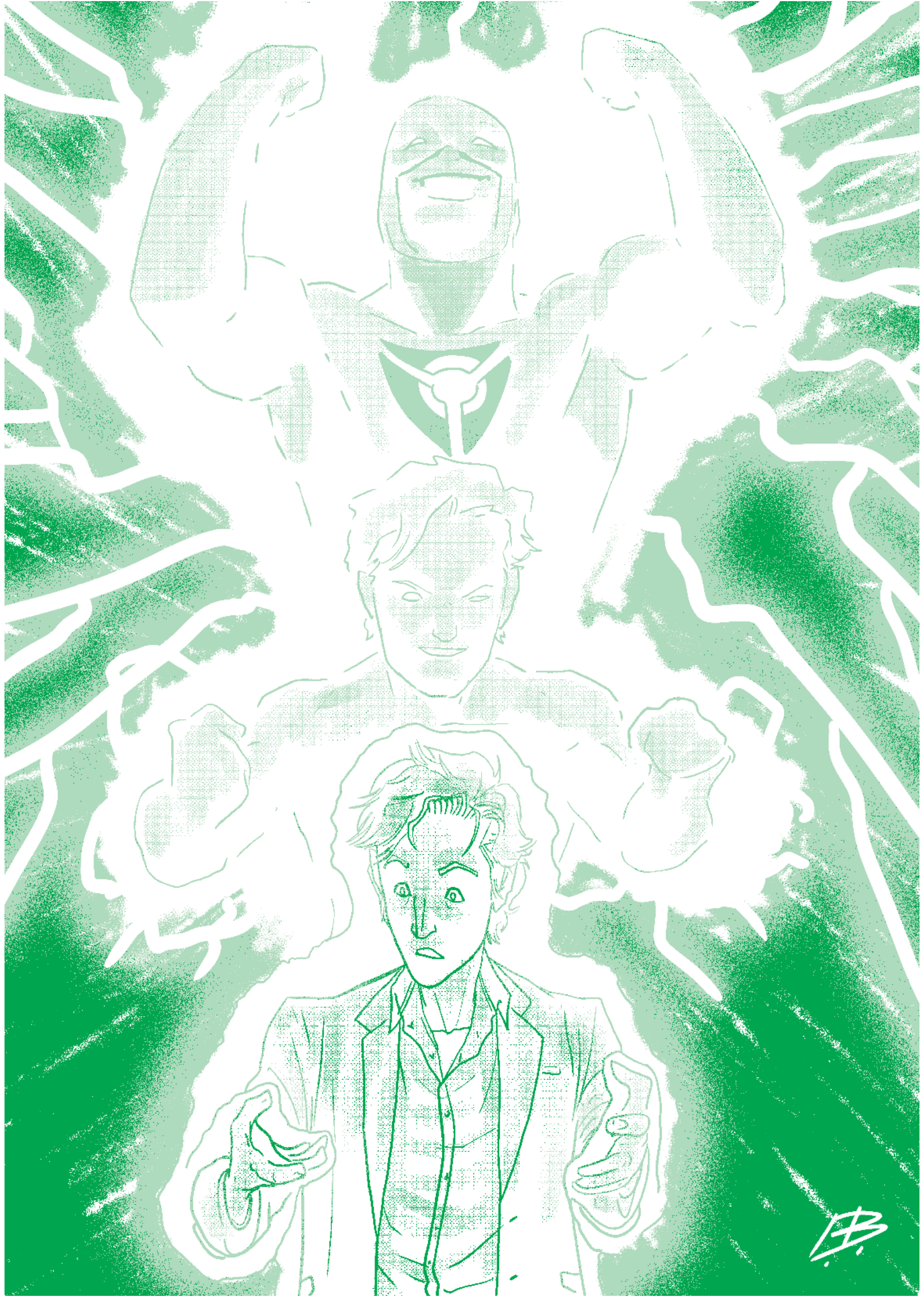
"POSTHUMANISM OFTEN SEEMS TO BE  
'A SUDDEN MUTATION OF THE TIMES  
[BUT] IN FACT, THE CONJUNCTIONS OF  
IMAGINATION AND SCIENCE, MYTH AND  
TECHNOLOGY, HAVE BEGUN BY  
FIRELIGHT IN THE CAVES OF LASCAUX."

IHAB HASSAN,  
'PROMETHEUS AS  
PERFORMER: TOWARD A  
POSTHUMANIST CULTURE?'  
(1977, P.205).

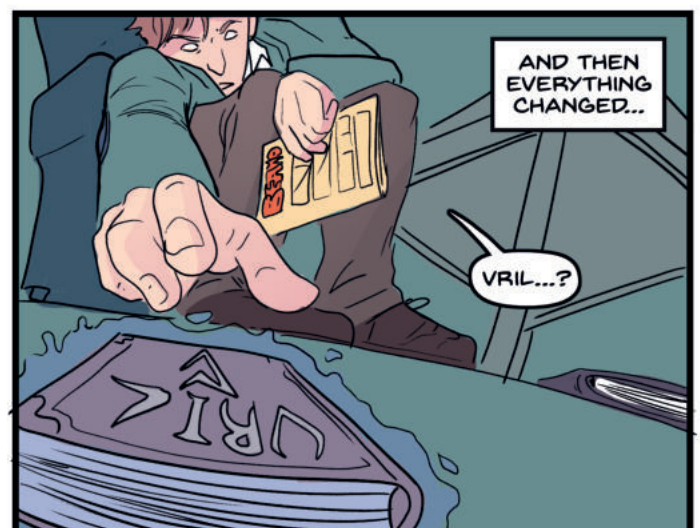
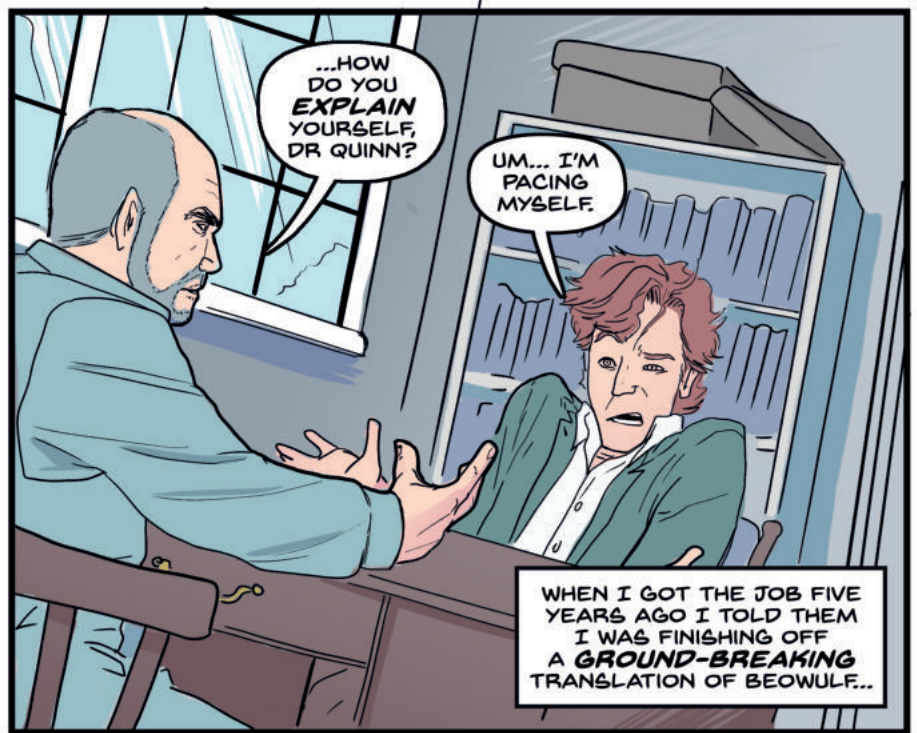
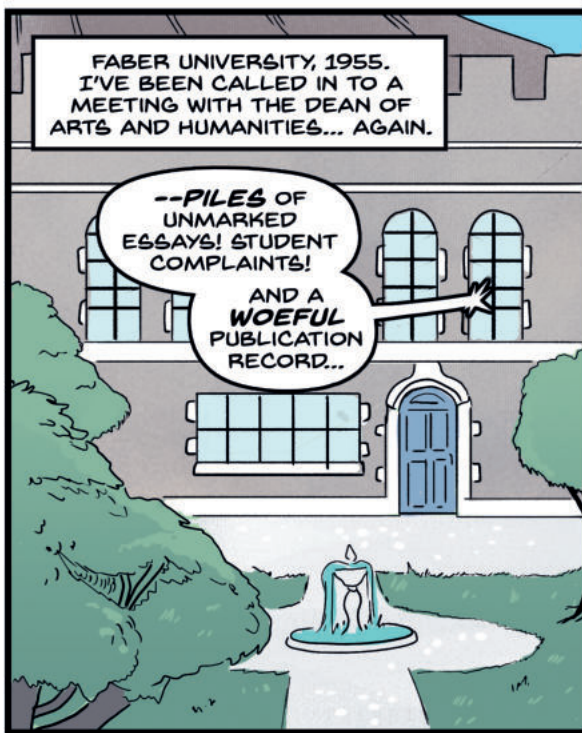
UP, UP  
AND  
AWAY!

JB

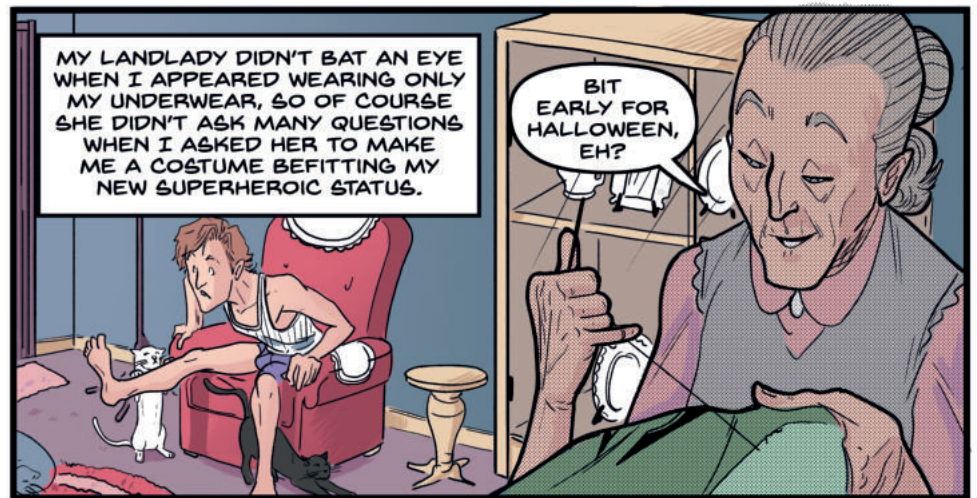
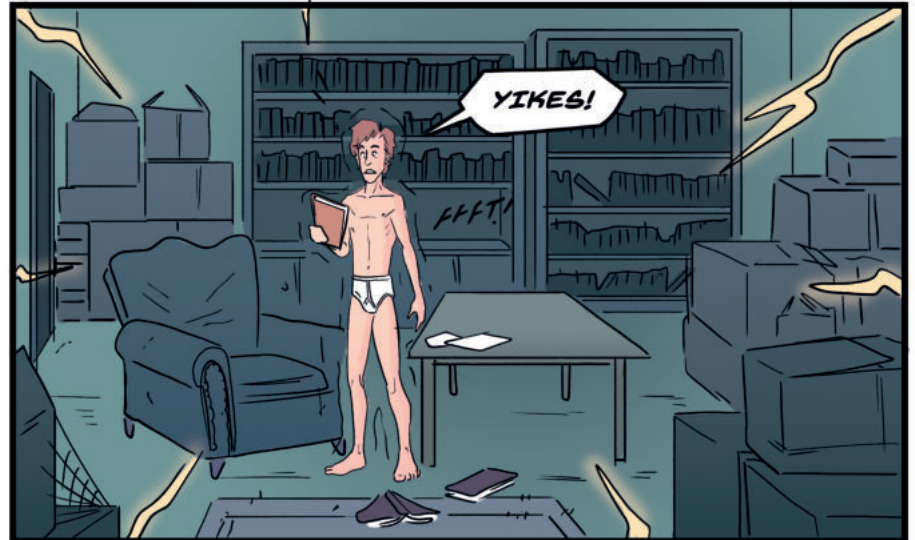
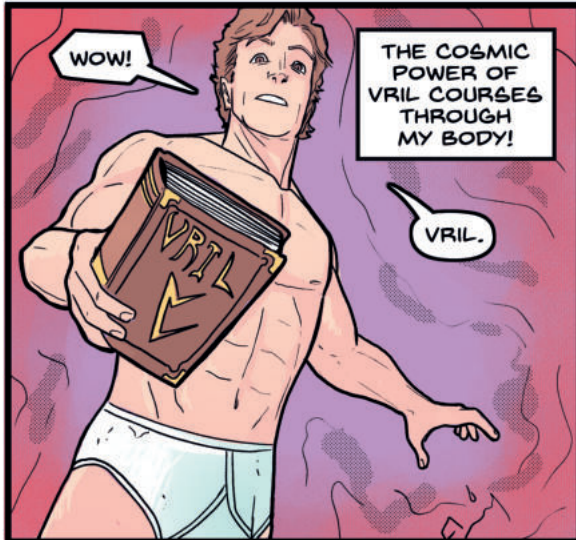
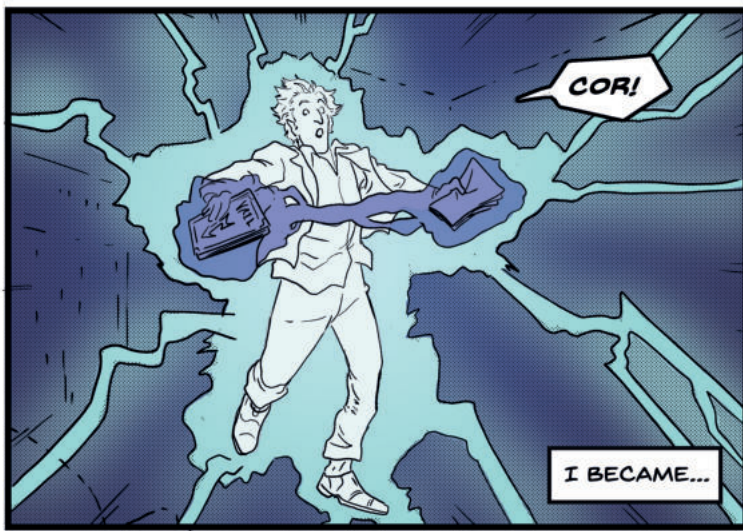








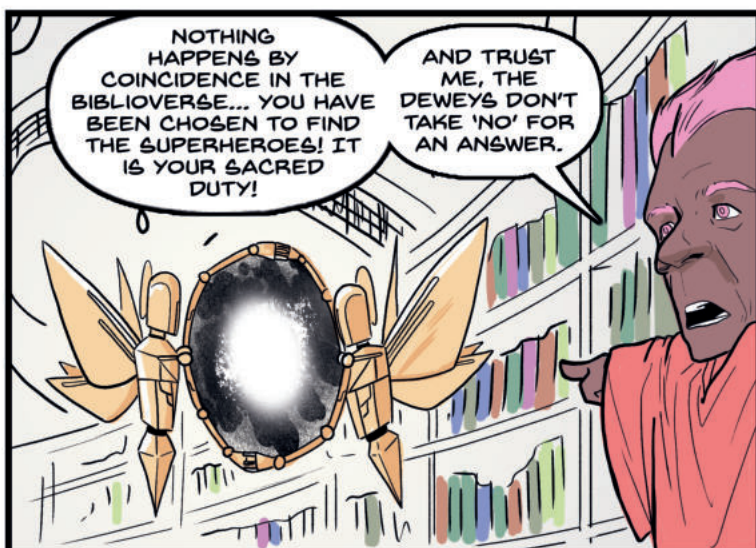
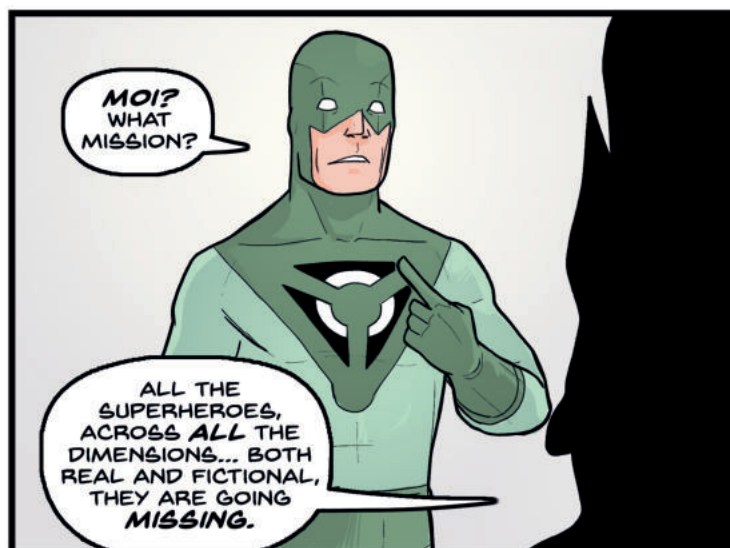
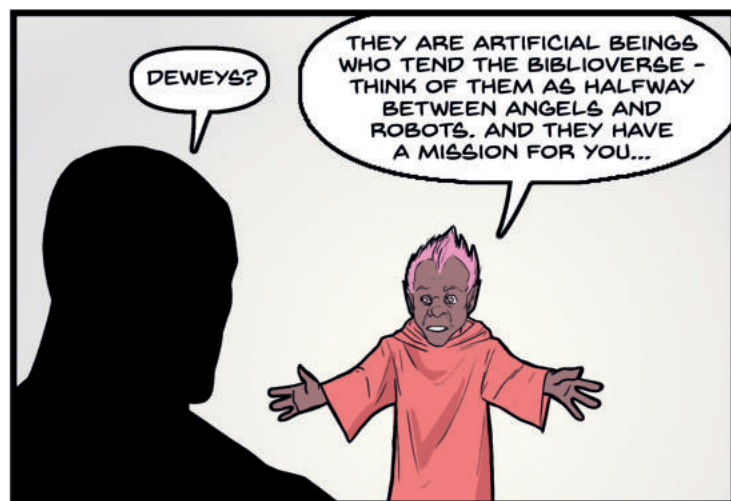
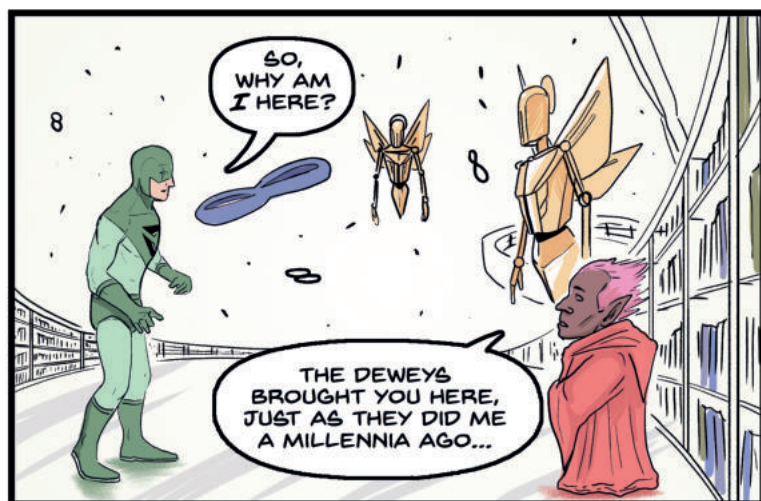
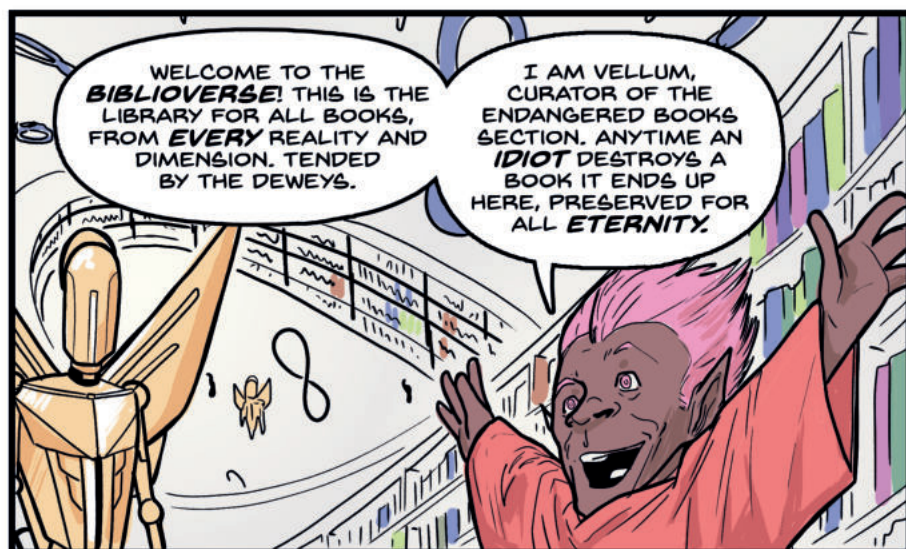
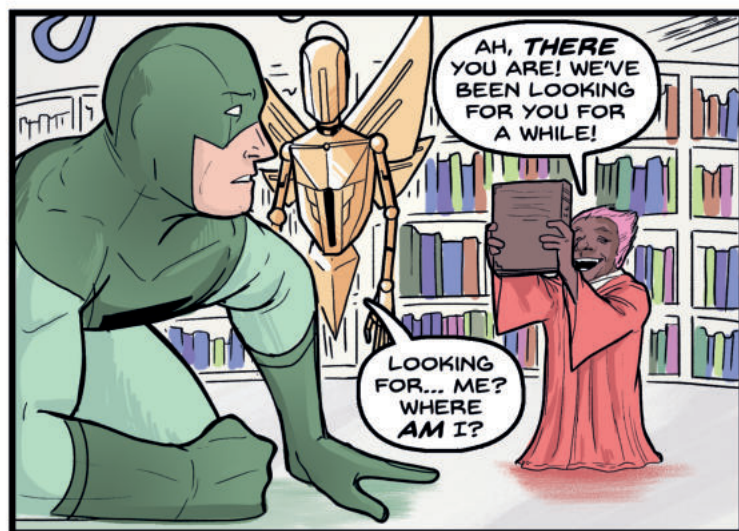















A vibrant, comic-style illustration of Captain Trivium, a superhero in a green suit with a white 'C' on his chest, running through a chaotic, multi-colored space filled with floating books, papers, and DNA helixes. He has a determined, smiling expression and his fists are clenched. The background is a mix of pink, orange, and purple hues with black ink splatters. A bright white light source is visible in the bottom left corner.

SO, THAT'S HOW I ENDED  
UP TRAVELLING THROUGH  
AN INFINITY OF PARALLEL  
REALITIES ON A MISSION FOR  
IMMORTAL LIBRARIANS TO  
SOLVE THE MYSTERY OF THE  
MISSING SUPERHEROES...

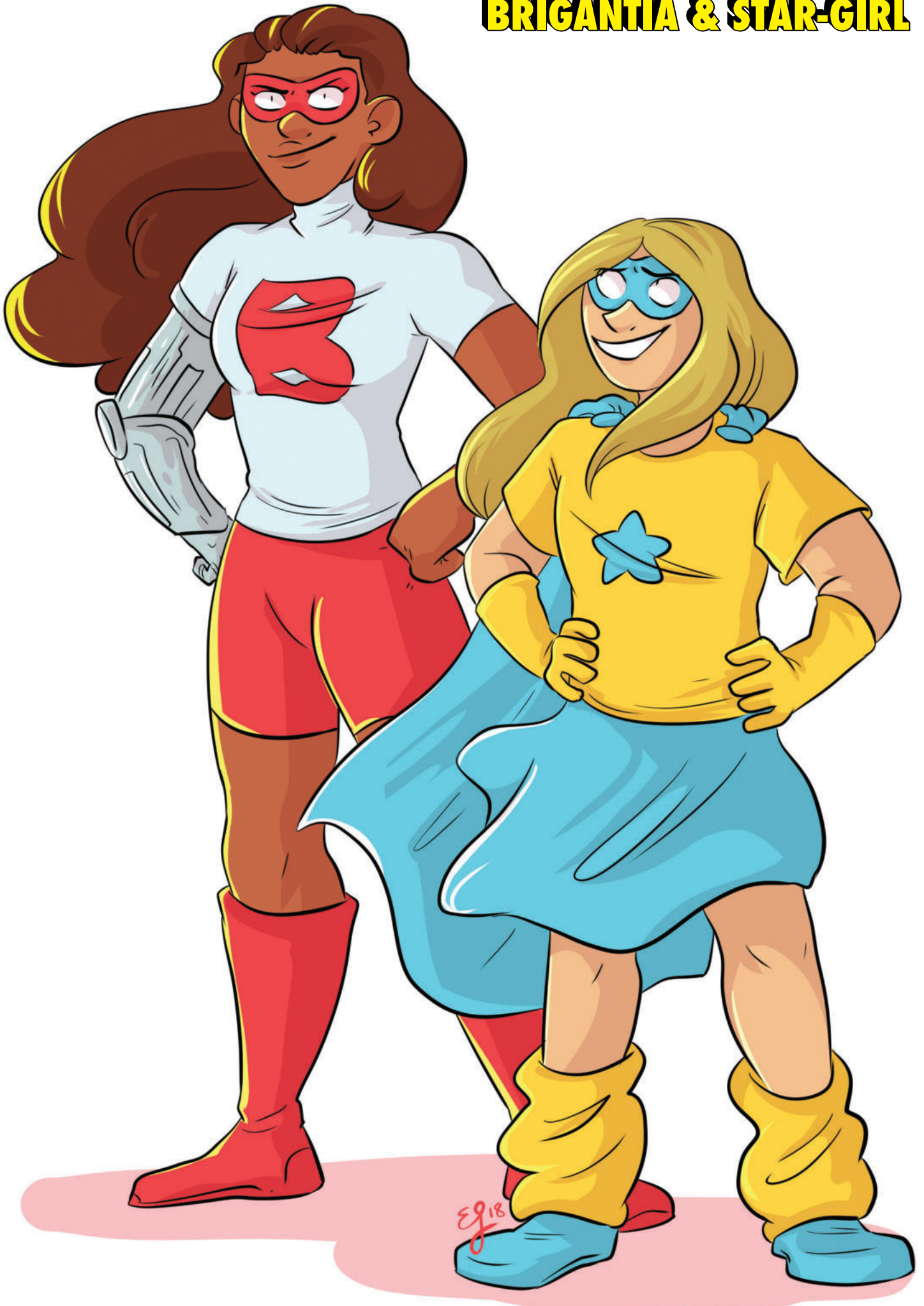
AND YOU THINK YOU  
HAVE PROBLEMS.

## Captain Trivium's Adventures in the Biblioverse

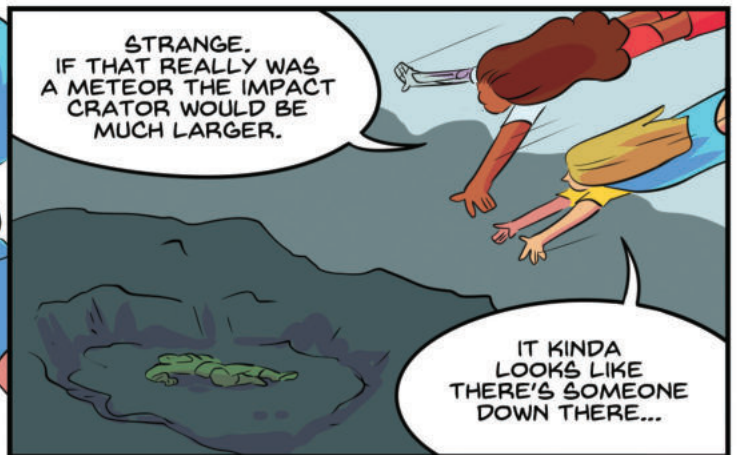
Chris Murray - Script  
Ell Balson - Art & Letters  
Catriona Laird - Colours



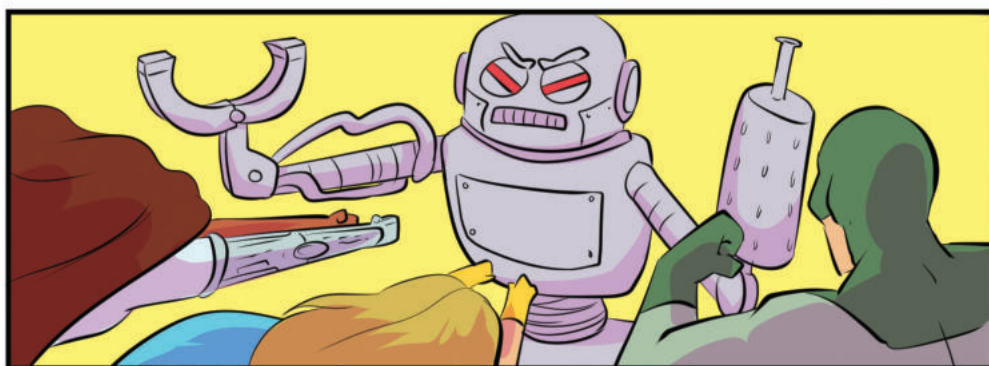
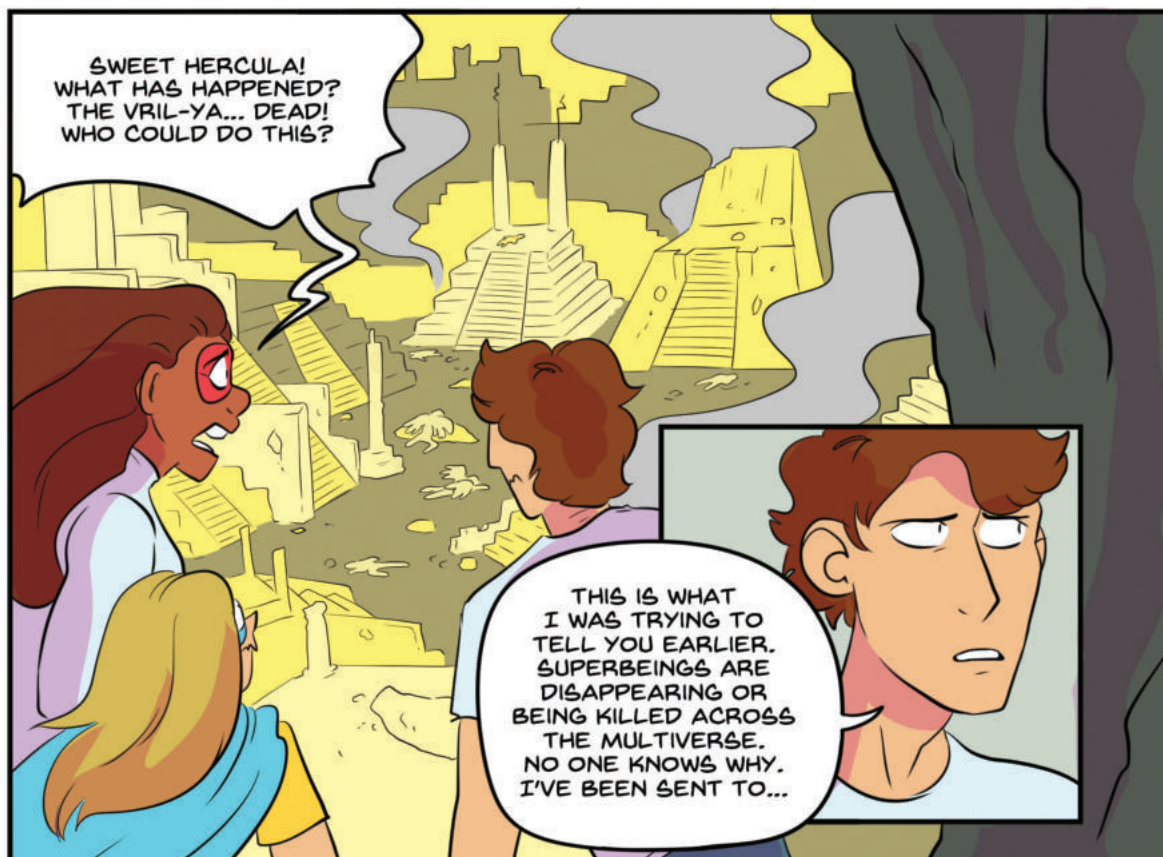
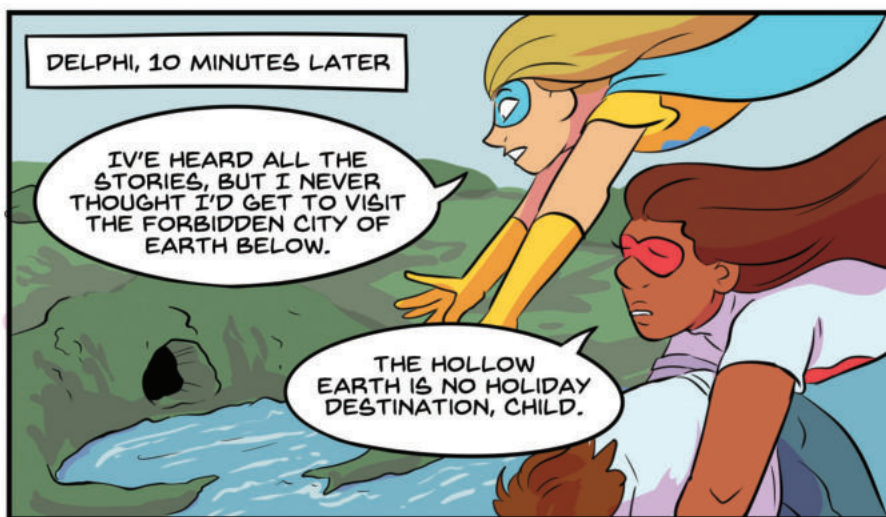
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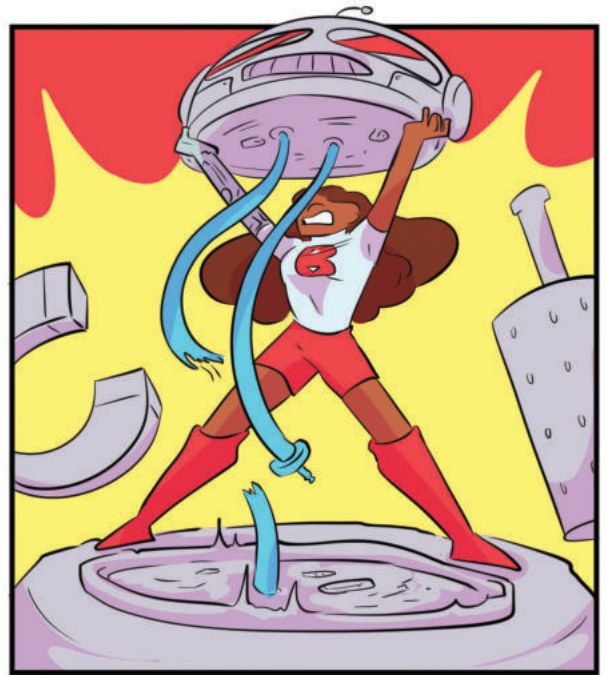










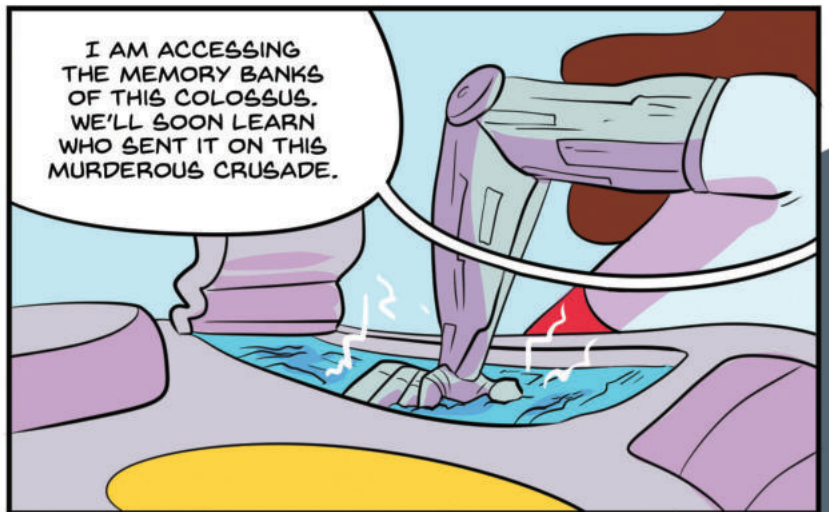


THIS IS GOING TO MAKE AN AMAZING STORY FOR THE DAILY TRUMPET...

YOU FOUGHT WELL, TRIVIAM, BUT I STILL DON'T TRUST YOU. I'LL BE WATCHING YOU.



WELL, I'M HAVING A HARD TIME BELIEVING ANY OF THIS IS REALLY HAPPENING, SO YOU CAN BELIEVE WHATEVER YOU LIKE!



I AM ACCESSING THE MEMORY BANKS OF THIS COLOSSUS. WE'LL SOON LEARN WHO SENT IT ON THIS MURDEROUS CRUSADE.



NO... IT CANNOT BE...

ZZZ PROJECTING ZZZ MEMORY ZZZ FILE ZZZ





SOON, THE IMPURE  
TAINT OF A MULTIVERSE  
OF SUPERBEINGS WILL BE  
REMOVED FOREVER!

OUR LEGACY  
MUST BE THE ONE  
TO DOMINATE FOR ALL  
TIME AND SPACE!

DEATH TO ALL  
WHO OPPOSE US!  
MUHAHAHAHA!

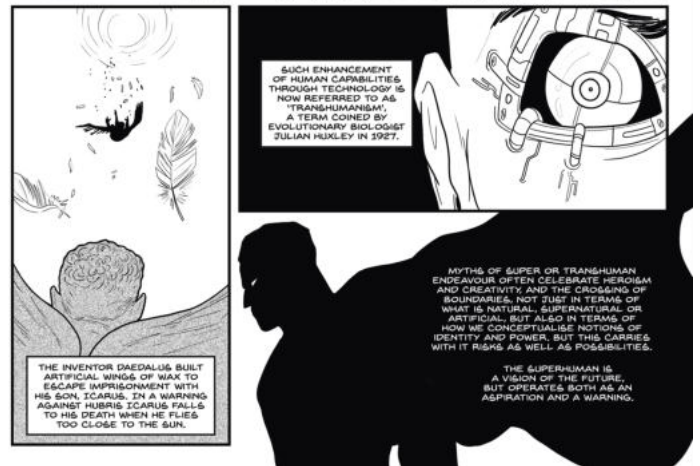
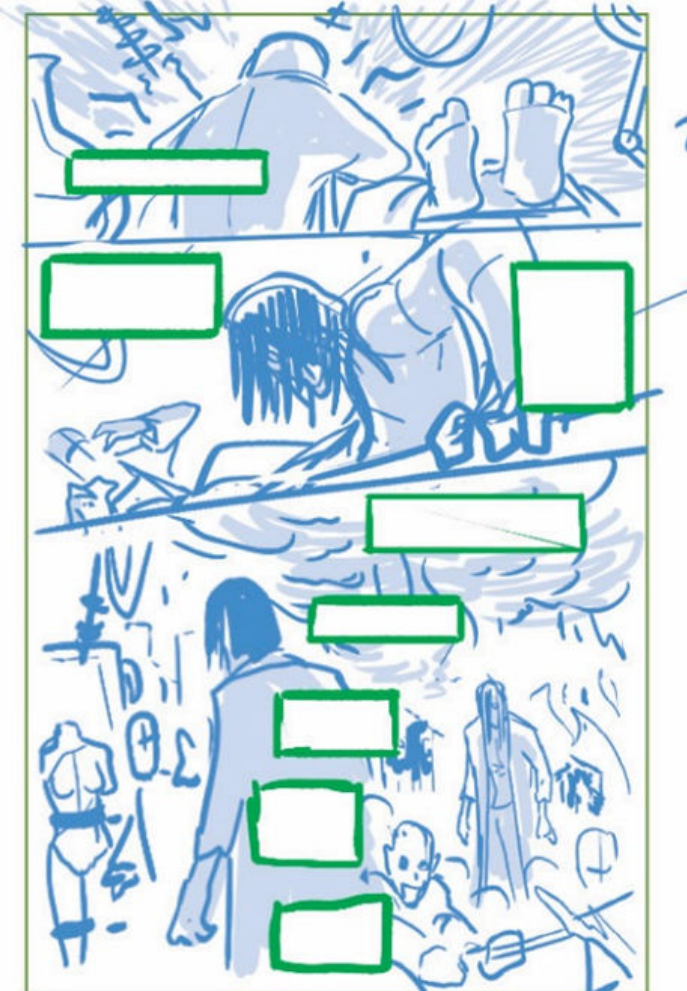
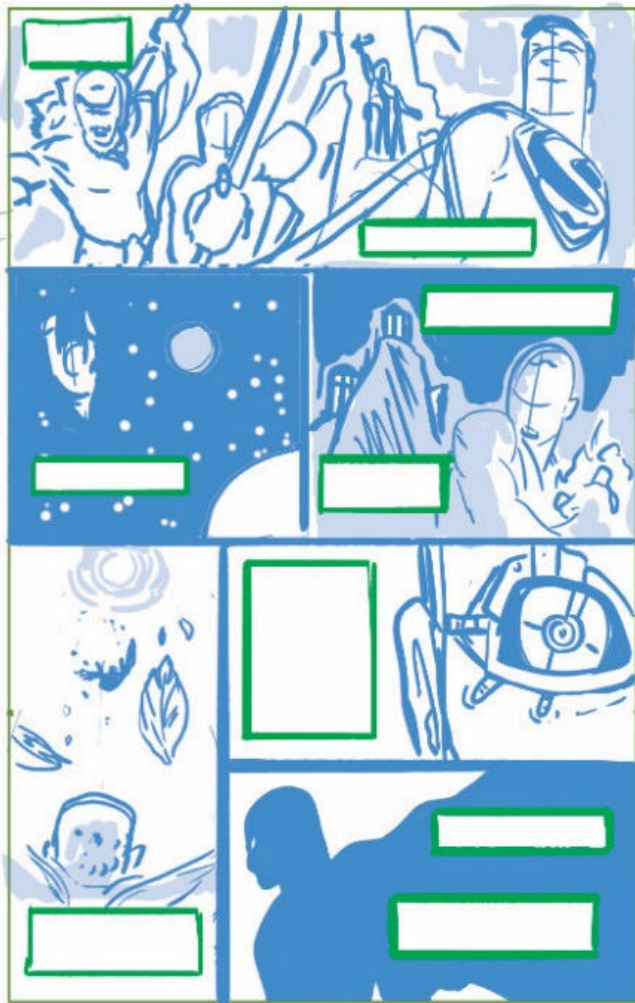
THIS LOOKS  
LIKE EVIL VERSIONS  
OF... US!

UMM.  
THIS ISN'T GOOD,  
IS IT...?

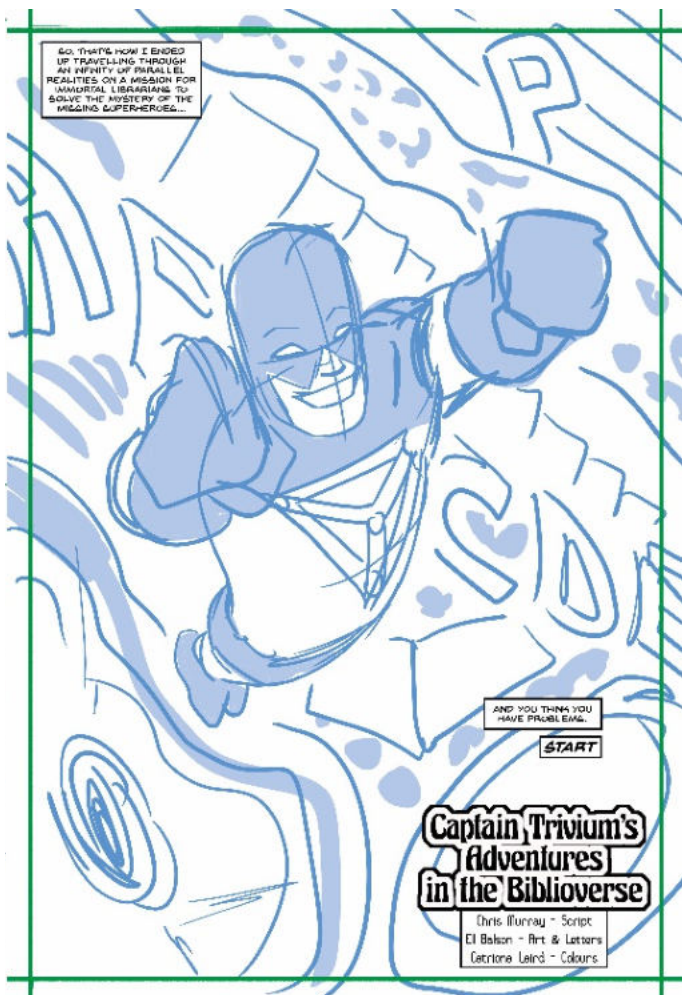
SCRIPT: CHRIS MURRAY  
ART AND LETTERING: EVE GREENWOOD



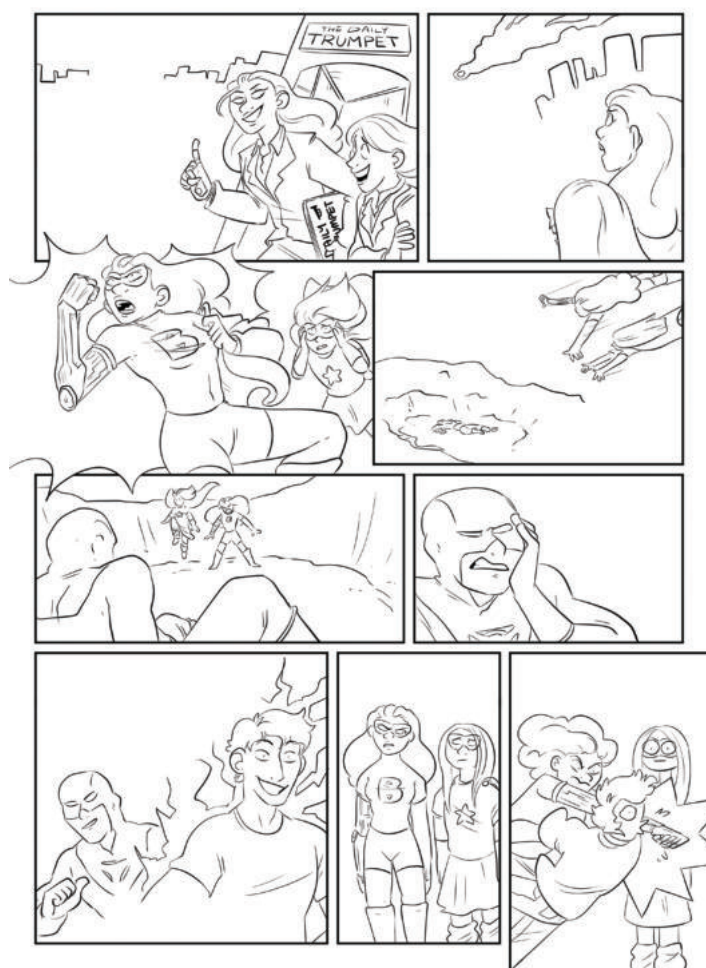
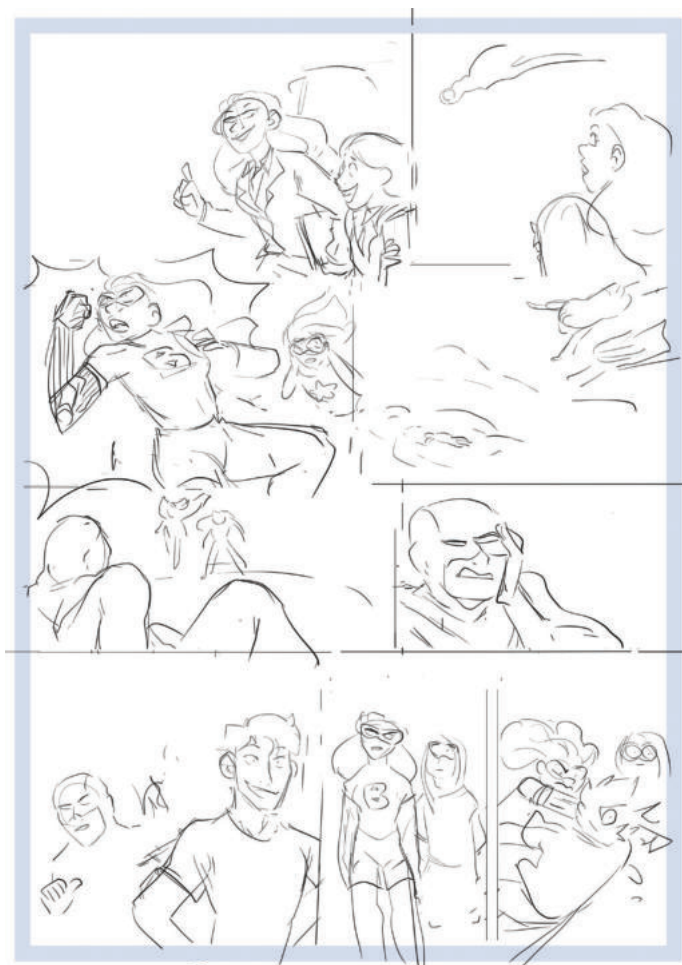
# PROCESS







Rough and inks by Elliot Balson



Rough and inks by Eve Greenwood



# KEY TERMS

**Biopower** - Michel Foucault's concept of 'biopower' is a kind of political technology that facilitates the control of bodies by determining the way that a whole society thinks about them. The related term, 'biopolitics', refers to the way that such ideas are policed by institutions and other expressions of knowledge. These ideas were first described in Foucault's *History of Sexuality Vol. 1, 'The Will to Knowledge'* (1976).

**Cyborg** - a human modified by technology. In her 'Cyborg Manifesto' (1985), Donna Haraway extends the definition, arguing that the cyborg distorts notions of difference between categories such as 'human', 'machine' and 'animal'.

**Eugenics** - Francis Galton introduced the term eugenics (meaning 'well-bred') in 1883, seeing it as the application of Darwinist principles to the human population. Eugenicist movements were popular in Britain and America in the early 20th century, and these ideas formed the basis of the Nazi policy to exterminate those who did not meet their Aryan ideal.

**Kino-Eye** - In the early 1920s film-maker and theorist Dziga Vertov (David Abelevich Kaufman) set out the idea that the medium of film offers a means of conceptualising and representing a new human consciousness. He argues that film has the revolutionary, transhumanist potential to extend human perception in new mechanically driven ways.

**Posthuman** - While transhumanism describes 'Human+' the notion of the 'posthuman' gestures towards a being who is beyond what might be described as 'human'. It also refers more broadly to a philosophical re-examination of the very notion of what it means to be human.

**Superhero** - A character, usually with special abilities (a superhuman), a secret identity, and a costume, who fights evil in order to preserve or advance human society.

**Superhuman** - A being who possesses abilities that exceed those currently exhibited by humankind. These abilities may be supernatural or scientific in origin. The figure of the superhuman has been a staple in myths, legends and stories since ancient times.

**Transhuman** - Evolutionary biologist Julian Huxley coined the term 'transhuman' in 1927, referring to the use of technology to enhance human life. In modern usage the term usually refers to the extension of human capabilities through technology, especially cybernetic implants, modification through genetic manipulation, or immersion within a virtual environment.

**Trivium** - The Medieval educational syllabus comprised seven liberal arts, the three lower orders of which (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) were referred to as the Trivium (meaning the place where three roads meet). The Trivium was considered essential to a classical education and had their roots in the educational traditions of Ancient Greece.

**Übermensch** - The concept of the Overman features prominently in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883) the Übermensch is presented as an ideal goal that humanity should aspire towards, and an exemplar of Nietzsche's nihilist philosophy.

**Vril** - A power associated with the Vril-Ya, a race of superhumans who reside in the Hollow Earth in *The Coming Race* (1871), a novel by Edward Bulwer-Lytton. Vril reflects Bulwer-Lytton's fascination with the occult and became associated with various self-improvement fads in the late nineteenth century.



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# CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Elliot Balson** is a Dundee-based comic artist. His work can be found in various UniVerse publications, Comichaus, and an upcoming anthology called *Masks*. He is currently working on his own series, *Untethered*, with writer Umar Ditta.

**Eve Greenwood** graduated with a degree in linguistics, and then promptly decided to spend the rest of their life drawing comics instead. Their main project is the free-to-read webcomic *Inhibit*, an ongoing comic about teenagers with superpowers, but you can find all their other work at [evegreenwood.com](http://evegreenwood.com).

**Dr. Damon Herd** is the Coordinator of the Dundee Comics Creative Space. He is also an artist and researcher with a PhD in Comics from the University of Dundee. His research area is autobiographical comics, and performance. He is the founder of DeeCAP (Dundee Comics/Art/Performance).

**Catriona Laird** is a Scottish illustrator and comic artist based in Ink Pot Studio in Dundee. She was the winner of the SiCBA award for Up and Coming Talent 2017 and was nominated for Best Artist for her ongoing webcomic *Chimerical* in 2018. Catriona is currently working on the upcoming graphic novel *Nasty Girls* with writer Erin Keepers and publisher George Lennox.

**Professor Chris Murray** is Chair of Comics Studies at the School of Humanities, University of Dundee, and he leads the MLitt in Comics and Graphic Novels course. He is Director of the Scottish Centre for Comics Studies and Dundee Comics Creative Space, co-editor of *Studies in Comics* (intellect) and UniVerse Comics, and has produced several public information comics for research and engagement purposes.



